

THE
BAHÁ'Í
WORLD
1994 • 95

In just over one hundred years, the Bahá'í Faith has grown from an obscure movement in the Middle East to the second-most widespread of the independent world religions. Embracing people from more than 2,100 ethnic, racial, and tribal groups, it is quite likely the most diverse organized body of people on the planet today. Its unity challenges prevailing theory about human nature and the prospects for our common future.

The Faith's central message is that of unity. Its Founder, Bahá'u'lláh, teaches that there is only one God, that there is only one human race, and that all the world's religions have been stages in the revelation of God's purpose for humankind. Today, humanity has collectively come of age: "The earth is but one country," Bahá'u'lláh asserts, "and mankind its citizens." The emergence of the Bahá'í community offers persuasive evidence that the human race, in all its diversity, can learn to live and work as a single people in its planetary homeland.

The Bahá'í World is the principle public record of the community's growth and development. The volumes reproduce major documents and provide statistical data and other detailed information on the Bahá'í Faith's wide-ranging program of activities, which are illustrated by many photographs and charts. In-depth articles focus on major areas of Bahá'í concern.

For the serious researcher and the general student alike, the dramatic growth of the Bahá'í Faith raises new and interesting issues about the role of religion in social development. *The Bahá'í World* series has been redesigned primarily to meet these needs.

THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD
1994-95

151 OF THE BAHÁ'Í ERA

THE
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WORLD
1994 • 95

AN
INTERNATIONAL RECORD

BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE
HAIFA

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1925, the Bahá'í community has published an international record of its activities and achievements, entitled *The Bahá'í World*. After appearing periodically for 67 years, the publication was revamped in 1992 to become an annual work which, while continuing to provide a record of the Bahá'í community's undertakings, also offers readers general information about the Bahá'í Faith, its objectives, and its teachings. The 1994–95 volume is the third in this new series.

The year 1994–95 is a significant one in the Bahá'í Faith. It marks the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb, the Manifestation (or Prophet) of God Who announced, in 1844, the advent of the “Day of God” prophesied in all earlier religions and Who sacrificed His life to prepare the world for that Day. In recognition of this anniversary, *The Bahá'í World* presents a compilation of excerpts from the Bahá'í sacred writings on the theme of the Manifestations of God and Their role in civilizing humanity and an article entitled “The Mission of the Báb: Retrospective 1844–1994,” which treats the significance of, and the world's response to, the Báb's life and teachings. The vitality of

thought brought to our age by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh is further reflected in a statement issued by the Bahá'í International Community Office of Public Information. *The Prosperity of Humankind*, first distributed at the United Nations World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, challenges accepted suppositions underlying development and offers not only a new definition of prosperity but also a vision of how it can best be achieved. And this year's "World Watch" article points to the signs of increasing globalization both envisioned in and made possible by the Revelations of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

Other features in the volume include a report on the formation of seven new National Spiritual Assemblies in April 1994; statements and activities of the Bahá'í International Community, including its participation in the World Summit for Social Development in March 1995; a survey of Bahá'í contributions to the commemoration of the United Nations International Year of the Family; an article on the development of the arts in the Bahá'í community; and a profile of the award-winning global newsletter *One Country*. Updates on the situation of Iran's beleaguered Bahá'í community and on the progress made during 1994–95 on the Mount Carmel construction projects at the Bahá'í World Centre, as well as survey articles covering activities in various fields of endeavor around the world, media treatment of the Bahá'í Faith, and achievements of youth, round out the regular features of the series. The volume's final section includes resources and information useful for those readers interested in doing further research into the Bahá'í Faith and the Bahá'í International Community.

A glance through *The Bahá'í World 1994–95* will assure any reader of the vitality of this worldwide community, its increasing interaction with organizations of civil society in efforts to address the crucial social issues confronting humanity, and its basic optimism. "Let your vision be world embracing," said Bahá'u'lláh—a message that Bahá'ís around the world are striving to advance in the world at large and to incarnate in their own lives.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY

Women and men gather in Garoua Boulai, a rural region of eastern Cameroon, to discuss how they can work together to alleviate some of the burdens placed on the women with regard to child care. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, scholars come together to exchange ideas on the topic "Anarchy into Order: Understanding Humanity's Role and Destiny." People on Goodenough Island, Papua New Guinea, escort a flower-strewn platform carrying a new Book of Laws to their village, ushering it in with respect and joyful songs. In Panchgani, India, a group of young boys is learning how to plant and tend tree seedlings in a course of studies on sustainable development at a locally run institute. A youth group performs a dance about the terrible consequences of racism to a rapt audience of children in a school auditorium on Vancouver Island, Canada. In Colombia, South America, a conga musical group imbues its traditional Latin rhythms with a spiritual message about the unity of humanity, to the delight of listeners at open-air venues. A team of medical specialists from the United Kingdom "twins" efforts with doctors at a hospital in Bulgaria, offering assistance in

training local practitioners. These people, though they have in all probability never met one another, share a united view of the world and its future, as well as their own role in shaping that future. They are members of the Bahá'í International Community.

The Bahá'í International Community, comprising members of the Bahá'í Faith from all over the globe, now numbers some five million souls. They represent 2,112 ethnic and tribal groups and live in over 116,000 localities in 188 independent countries and 45 dependent territories or overseas departments. What was once regarded by some as an obscure, tiny sect is now the second-most widely spread independent religion in the world, after Christianity, as documented by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Its membership cuts across all boundaries of class and race, governing itself through the establishment of local and national elected bodies known as Spiritual Assemblies. Haifa, Israel, is the site of its international center and the seat of its world-governing council, known as the Universal House of Justice.

From what source do the members of the Bahá'í Faith draw their spiritual strength and their organizational structure? What are the tenets of faith that can so attract and unify such a diverse group of people? With what vision do they face the future? To answer such questions, there follows a brief introduction to the Bahá'í community, its history, its spiritual teachings, its aims and objectives, and its vision of the future.

Origins

In 1844 in Persia, a young siyyid (descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad) named Mírzá 'Alí-Muḥammad declared Himself to be the Promised Qá'im awaited by Shí'ih Muslims. He adopted the title "the Báb," which means "the Gate," and His teachings quickly attracted a large following. Alarmed by the growing numbers of "Bábís," as His followers were known, the Muslim clergy allied themselves with ministers of the Shah in an effort to destroy the infant Faith. Some 20,000 Bábís were persecuted, tortured, and killed over the next number of years, but the growth of this new religion continued, even after the Báb Himself was imprisoned and subsequently publicly executed by a firing squad in July 1850. The horrific treatment of the Bábís at the hands of

the secular and religious authorities was recorded by a number of Western diplomats, scholars, and travelers, who expressed their admiration for the character and fortitude of those suffering persecution.

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

Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí, known to history as Bahá'u'lláh, was one of the leading adherents of the Bábí Faith who was arrested and imprisoned during the tumultuous years of the Báb's brief ministry. He was spared from execution but was banished from Persia to Baghdad, thence to Constantinople, Adrianople, and finally to the penal colony of Acre in Palestine. Thus, the Persian government, which had secured the support of the Ottoman Turkish authorities in suppressing the new movement, expected that His sphere of influence would be severely limited. During His imprisonment Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí had received the first divine intimations that He was the Promised One of whom the Báb had spoken. He adopted the title Bahá'u'lláh, which means "the Glory of God," and publicly declared His mission on the eve of His exile from Baghdad, in April 1863.

After some forty years of exile, Bahá'u'lláh passed away in the vicinity of Acre in 1892, still nominally a prisoner, though the authorities had loosened their restrictions as they had become acquainted with Him and the nature of His teachings. During the long years of His exile and imprisonment, He revealed over 100 volumes of writings, consisting of the laws and ordinances of His dispensation, letters to the kings and rulers of the East and the West, mystical teachings, and other divinely-inspired writings.

In His will and testament, Bahá'u'lláh appointed His eldest son, 'Abbás Effendi, who adopted the title 'Abdu'l-Bahá (the

Servant of Bahá), as His successor and sole authoritative interpreter of His teachings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had shared the long years of exile and imprisonments of His Father, being eventually freed only in 1908, after the Young Turk Revolution. Shortly thereafter, now at an advanced age, He embarked on an arduous journey to Europe and America where, from 1911 to 1913, He proclaimed Bahá'u'lláh's message of universal brotherhood and peace to large audiences, consolidated fledgling Bahá'í communities, and warned of the potential catastrophe looming on Europe's darkening horizon. By the time World War I erupted in 1914, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had returned to His home in Haifa, just across the bay from Acre in Palestine, and devoted Himself to caring for the people of that city, fending off famine by feeding them from stores of grain He had safeguarded for just such an eventuality. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's humanitarian services were recognized by the British government which, at the end of the war, conferred upon Him a knighthood, a title He declined to use. He passed away in 1921 and is buried on Mount Carmel in a vault near where the remains of the Báb were interred by Him some years before.

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

Another legacy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was His will and testament, which Bahá'ís regard as the charter of the administrative order conceived by Bahá'u'lláh. In this document, 'Abdu'l-Bahá appointed His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, to succeed Him after His passing as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith and authorized interpreter of its teachings.

During the period of his Guardianship, from 1921 to 1957, Shoghi Effendi concentrated his attention on four main areas: the development of the Bahá'í World Centre in the environs of Haifa, Israel; the translation and interpretation of the Bahá'í sacred writings; the unfoldment of the administrative order of the Bahá'í Faith; and the implementation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's divine plan for

the propagation of the Bahá'í Faith around the world.

At the Bahá'í World Centre, Shoghi Effendi effected the construction of a superstructure for the mausoleum containing the remains of the Báb, which had been brought from Persia to the Holy Land and been interred by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a tomb on Mount Carmel in a spot designated by Bahá'u'lláh. Shoghi Effendi beautified and expanded the simple native stone structure, which is today a site of pilgrimage for Bahá'ís from all over the world. He enhanced the Bahá'í properties, particularly the site of Bahá'u'lláh's grave at Bahjí, with gardens of striking beauty, and he also initiated the construction of the International Bahá'í Archives Building, designated to house and preserve artifacts from the early days of the Bahá'í Faith. The International Archives Building was also the first structure built on the arc-shaped path on the site designated as the world administrative center of the Bahá'í community. It was completed in 1957.

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

Development of the Administrative Order

Shoghi Effendi's work in developing the Bahá'í administrative order is perhaps the most dramatic legacy of his years as Guardian. The first step in this development was to encourage the organized, planned expansion of Bahá'í communities in places where

local and national Bahá'í councils, known as Spiritual Assemblies, would eventually be established. The Guardian effected this global expansion of Bahá'í communities through a series of international plans that ran for varying numbers of years and during which twelve National Spiritual Assemblies were founded.

At the time of Shoghi Effendi's sudden passing in 1957, the Bahá'í community was in the middle of a global plan of expansion and consolidation called "The Ten Year Crusade." During this period, which concluded in 1963—the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of His mission in the Garden of Riqḍán in Baghdad—the goal was to open 132 new countries and major territories to the Faith and expand existing communities in 120 countries and territories previously opened to the Faith. These ambitious targets were actually exceeded by the end of the plan, in spite of the difficulties posed by the Guardian's death.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His will and testament, had authorized the continuation of the Guardianship through the appointment by the Guardian of a successor from among his own sons, should he have them, or other direct descendants of Bahá'u'lláh. Such a designation was dependent upon the choice by the Guardian of someone who met the demanding spiritual requirements necessary for such a position. Shoghi Effendi had no children and died without designating such an heir. He had, however, taken steps toward the election of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme governing body of the Bahá'í Faith which was to function as one of the successors of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He had also appointed a number of individual Bahá'ís to an auxiliary institution of the Guardianship called "Hands of the Cause of God." These individuals had been charged with the duty of protecting the unity of the faith and collaborating with the National Spiritual Assemblies around the world to ensure that the goals of the Ten Year Crusade were won. Upon the passing of Shoghi Effendi, they gathered together to guide the Bahá'í community to the completion of the plan initiated by the Guardian and towards the first election of the Universal House of Justice, which took place in April 1963.

Conceived by Bahá'u'lláh Himself, the institution of the Universal House of Justice is established on principles laid

down in the Bahá'í sacred writings. Its election, by the members of the 56 National Spiritual Assemblies that existed in April 1963, clearly demonstrated the principle of unity so central to the Bahá'í Faith, with the nine elected members coming from four continents and representing a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Basing itself on the authority conferred on it by the Founder of the Faith, the Universal House of Justice has stood as the unchallenged authority in the worldwide Bahá'í community since 1963. During the last 31 years, the Universal House of Justice has launched five global plans for the advancement of the Faith. From a worldwide population of 408,000 in 1963, the Bahá'í community has grown to approximately five million; the number of National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies has grown from 56 to 172; and the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies has increased from 3,555 to approximately 18,000. Bahá'ís live in some 225 countries and territories around the planet.

Spiritual and Moral Teachings and Bahá'í Community Life

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

teachings brought by each divine Messenger.

In this new stage of humanity's development, the time has come for the recognition of the unity of the human race, for the establishment of the equality of women and men, for the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty, and for the realization of the age-old promise of universal peace. Lkening the development of the human race to that of a child, the Bahá'í belief is that we have passed through the stages analogous to infancy and childhood and are now enduring a tumultuous adolescence, on the threshold of maturity. Bahá'u'lláh taught that humanity is destined to come of age, but the course it takes to achieve that goal is entirely in its own hands.

To promote the development of a society in which Bahá'í ideals can be fully realized, Bahá'u'lláh established laws and moral teachings that Bahá'ís are enjoined to follow. Central to these is daily obligatory prayer. Study and meditation upon the Bahá'í sacred writings is also enjoined upon believers each morning and evening. Bahá'ís between the ages of 15 and 70, with the exception of the sick, pregnant women, and nursing mothers, observe a nineteen-day, dawn-to-dusk fast each year. Bahá'u'lláh referred to prayer and fasting as the "twin pillars" of faith, an indication of their importance and the benefits to be gained from them. He also raised work to the level of worship. The main repository of Bahá'u'lláh's laws is a volume entitled the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, or "the Most Holy Book."

There are no dietary restrictions in the Bahá'í Faith, but the consumption of alcohol and the use of narcotic and hallucinogenic drugs are forbidden, as they interfere with spiritual growth. Bahá'u'lláh counselled Bahá'ís to be honest and trustworthy, to render service to humanity with an abundance of deeds rather than mere words, to be chaste in their relationships with others, and to avoid gossip and backbiting. He forbade lying, stealing, adultery, sodomy, and promiscuity. The importance of the family is central to Bahá'í community life, as is the moral and spiritual education of children.

Bahá'ís often gather together in their communities to study the sacred writings of their faith and to pray, but a main pillar in Bahá'í community life is a meeting called "the Nineteen Day

Feast," at which all members join in worship, consult about community affairs, and socialize. For the time being, pending the further development of Bahá'í communities, these meetings often occur in rented facilities, people's homes, or, in some locations, in the local Bahá'í center. The Bahá'í writings call for the erection in each community of beautifully designed Houses of Worship set in exquisite gardens as spiritual centers of activity, and for a variety of social and humanitarian institutions to be established around them. Bahá'í Houses of Worship presently exist on each continent, and sites have been purchased around the world for construction of many more in the future. They are open to people of all faiths (or those professing no particular faith) for prayer and meditation. Services are non-denominational, consisting of readings and prayers from the Bahá'í writings and scriptures of other world faiths, with no sermons, and including music by an a capella choir. The idea is to preserve for worshippers the sacredness of the experience of hearing and meditating upon the Holy Word without the interference of man-made concepts.

Aims, Objectives, and Activities

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

Community's United Nations Office, Office of the Environment, Office for the Advancement of Women, and Office of Public Information collaborate with National Spiritual Assemblies around the world in various projects and representations at international gatherings.

The activities of the Bahá'í International Community at the United Nations have earned it a reputation as one of the most effective religious NGOs in the UN system, and it has played an active role in major international events such as the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993, and the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995. It will also send a delegation to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995.

Beyond the scope of the United Nations, Bahá'ís look towards a day when a new international order will be established, a commonwealth to which all the nations of the world will belong. As Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1936,

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

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

...The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race.¹

To make its aims and objectives widely known and to promote its perspective on various issues, the Bahá'í International Community has been active not only in collaborating with like-minded organizations such as the United Nations but has also been engaged in public relations efforts for many years, bringing spiritual and social principles of the Faith to the attention of the generality of humankind. Information about the Bahá'í Faith became much more widely disseminated than it had been as international news media reported the persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran which came in the wake of the 1979 Iranian revolution. More than 200 members of the Faith were executed for their belief, considered as heresy by the regime, and thousands more were imprisoned, fired from their jobs, or had their homes confiscated or their pensions cut off as a result of government orders. Bahá'ís around the world responded in unity to the situation in Iran—the land in which their religion was born—by petitioning their governments to take action against this treatment; and it is, to some degree, as a result of these efforts that the persecutions were not more extreme. Executions have ceased, although Iran's Bahá'ís are still denied fundamental rights and freedoms.

The Bahá'í community has also taken a proactive approach in promulgating its views. The statement on peace issued by the Universal House of Justice in 1985, entitled *The Promise of World Peace*, sparked a worldwide campaign of presentations and

1. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters*, 2d rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), pp. 203–204.

public education that lasted throughout the International Year of Peace and beyond and encompassed government figures and leaders of thought, as well as the general population. Then, to mark the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's passing in 1992, the Bahá'í International Community Office of Public Information published *Bahá'u'lláh*, a statement about the Faith's Founder, detailing His life, His teachings, and His mission. Events of the year itself, notably the commemoration in the Holy Land in May 1992 of the centenary of the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, involving some 3,000 participants from all over the world, and the Bahá'í World Congress held in New York City in November 1992, which attracted some 27,000 Bahá'ís from around the globe, caused much publicity for the Faith. Most recently, in January 1995, the Office of Public Information released another major statement on social development, entitled *The Prosperity of Humankind*. Widely disseminated at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995, the statement promises to lead to further engagement of the Bahá'í community with leaders of thought in this field.

Aside from large-scale public relations activities and the publication of statements on different themes, the Bahá'í community has been continually engaged in a series of international teaching plans, and it has seen rapid expansion in different parts of the world, most notably in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where national Bahá'í communities have been established in recent years following the collapse of long-standing political barriers. Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the former USSR were the first, in 1991; Albania, Azerbaijan, the Baltic States, Central Asia, Hungary, Poland, and Russia, Georgia, and Armenia, as well as the Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova followed in 1992. The further dramatic expansion in the numbers of Local Spiritual Assemblies throughout Central Asia led to the announcement by the Universal House of Justice that at Ridván 1994 five new National Assemblies would be established where the single community of Central Asia had existed before. The Regional Spiritual Assembly of Central Asia having outlived its usefulness, the National Spiritual Assembly of Turkmenistan came into its own, and new National Spiritual

Assemblies were formed in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Slovenia and Croatia also elected their first Regional Spiritual Assembly, and National Spiritual Assemblies came into existence in Cambodia and Mongolia. The establishment of more National and Regional Assemblies is expected in 1995 as well.

The existence and growth of the Bahá'í community offers irrefutable evidence that humanity, in all its diversity, can learn to live and work together in harmony. While Bahá'ís are not unaware of the turmoil in the world surrounding them, their view is succinctly depicted in the following words, taken from *The Prosperity of Humankind*:

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

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

BAHÁ'Í SACRED WRITINGS

Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves. That the divers communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence of the Faith of God and His Religion. These principles and laws, these firmly-established and mighty systems, have proceeded from one Source, and are the rays of one Light. That they differ one from another is to be attributed to the varying requirements of the ages in which they were promulgated.

The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God's holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife. The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the

light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind....

...in the kingdoms of earth and heaven there must needs be manifested a Being, an Essence Who shall act as a Manifestation and Vehicle for the transmission of the grace of the Divinity Itself, the Sovereign Lord of all. Through the Teachings of this Day Star of Truth every man will advance and develop until he attaineth the station at which he can manifest all the potential forces with which his inmost true self hath been endowed. It is for this very purpose that in every age and dispensation the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones have appeared amongst men, and have evinced such power as is born of God and such might as only the Eternal can reveal.

Know thou assuredly that the essence of all the Prophets of God is one and the same. Their unity is absolute. God, the Creator, saith: There is no distinction whatsoever among the Bearers of My Message. They all have but one purpose; their secret is the same secret. To prefer one in honor to another, to exalt certain ones above the rest, is in no wise to be permitted. Every true Prophet hath regarded His Message as fundamentally the same as the Revelation of every other Prophet gone before Him....

...any apparent variation in the intensity of their light is not inherent in the light itself, but should rather be attributed to the varying receptivity of an ever-changing world. Every Prophet Whom the Almighty and Peerless Creator hath purposed to send to the peoples of the earth hath been entrusted with a Message, and charged to act in a manner that would best meet the requirements of the age in which He appeared. God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate

the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.

The Prophets of God should be regarded as physicians whose task is to foster the well-being of the world and its peoples, that, through the spirit of oneness, they may heal the sickness of a divided humanity. To none is given the right to question their words or disparage their conduct, for they are the only ones who can claim to have understood the patient and to have correctly diagnosed its ailments. No man, however acute his perception, can ever hope to reach the heights which the wisdom and understanding of the Divine Physician have attained. Little wonder, then, if the treatment prescribed by the physician in this day should not be found to be identical with that which he prescribed before. How could it be otherwise when the ills affecting the sufferer necessitate at every stage of his sickness a special remedy? In like manner, every time the Prophets of God have illumined the world with the resplendent radiance of the Day Star of Divine knowledge, they have invariably summoned its peoples to embrace the light of God through such means as best befitted the exigencies of the age in which they appeared....

The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds.

Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

From the days of Adam until today, the religions of God have been made manifest, one following the other, and each one of them fulfilled its due function, revived mankind, and provided

education and enlightenment. They freed the people from the darkness of the world of nature and ushered them into the brightness of the Kingdom. As each succeeding Faith and Law became revealed it remained for some centuries a richly fruitful tree and to it was committed the happiness of humankind. However, as the centuries rolled by, it aged, it flourished no more and put forth no fruit, wherefore was it then made young again....

Our meaning is this: the religion of God is one, and it is the educator of humankind, but still, it needs must be made new. When thou dost plant a tree, its height increaseth day by day. It putteth forth blossoms and leaves and luscious fruits. But after a long time, it doth grow old, yielding no fruitage any more. Then doth the Husbandman of Truth take up the seed from that same tree, and plant it in a pure soil; and lo, there standeth the first tree, even as it was before.

...the Holy Manifestations of God are the centers of the light of reality, of the source of mysteries, and of the bounties of love. They are resplendent in the world of hearts and thoughts, and shower eternal graces upon the world of spirits; They give spiritual life and are shining with the light of realities and meanings. The enlightenment of the world of thought comes from these centers of light and sources of mysteries. Without the bounty of the splendor and the instructions of these Holy Beings the world of souls and thoughts would be opaque darkness. Without the irrefutable teachings of those sources of mysteries the human world would become the pasture of animal appetites and qualities, the existence of everything would be unreal, and there would be no true life....

All humankind are as children in a school, and the Dawning-Points of Light, the Sources of divine revelation, are the teachers, wondrous and without peer. In the school of realities they educate these sons and daughters, according to teachings from God, and foster them in the bosom of grace, so that they may develop along every line, show forth the excellent gifts and

blessings of the Lord, and combine human perfections; that they may advance in all aspects of human endeavor, whether outward or inward, hidden or visible, material or spiritual, until they make of this mortal world a widespread mirror, to reflect that other world which dieth not.

Two calls to success and prosperity are being raised from the heights of the happiness of mankind, awakening the slumbering, granting sight to the blind, causing the heedless to become mindful, bestowing hearing upon the deaf, unloosing the tongue of the mute and resuscitating the dead.

The one is the call of civilization, of the progress of the material world. This pertaineth to the world of phenomena, promoteth the principles of material achievement, and is the trainer for the physical accomplishments of mankind. It compriseth the laws, regulations, arts and sciences through which the world of humanity hath developed; laws and regulations which are the outcome of lofty ideals and the result of sound minds, and which have stepped forth into the arena of existence through the efforts of the wise and cultured in past and subsequent ages. The propagator and executive power of this call is just government.

The other is the soul-stirring call of God, Whose spiritual teachings are safeguards of the everlasting glory, the eternal happiness and illumination of the world of humanity, and cause attributes of mercy to be revealed in the human world and the life beyond.

This second call is founded upon the instructions and exhortations of the Lord and the admonitions and altruistic emotions belonging to the realm of morality which, like unto a brilliant light, brighten and illumine the lamp of the realities of mankind. Its penetrative power is the Word of God.

However, until material achievements, physical accomplishments and human virtues are reinforced by spiritual perfections, luminous qualities and characteristics of mercy, no fruit or result shall issue therefrom, nor will the happiness of the world of humanity, which is the ultimate aim, be attained.

Universal benefits derive from the grace of the Divine religions, for they lead their true followers to sincerity of intent, to high purpose, to purity and spotless honor, to surpassing kindness and compassion, to the keeping of their covenants when they have covenanted, to concern for the rights of others, to liberality, to justice in every aspect of life, to humanity and philanthropy, to valor and to unflagging efforts in the service of mankind. It is religion, to sum up, which produces all human virtues, and it is these virtues which are the bright candles of civilization....

Praise be to God, throughout succeeding centuries and ages the call of civilization hath been raised, the world of humanity hath been advancing and progressing day by day, various countries have been developing by leaps and bounds, and material improvements have increased, until the world of existence obtained universal capacity to receive the spiritual teachings and to hearken to the Divine Call. The suckling babe passeth through various physical stages, growing and developing at every stage, until its body reacheth the age of maturity. Having arrived at this stage it acquireth the capacity to manifest spiritual and intellectual perfections. The lights of comprehension, intelligence and knowledge become perceptible in it and the powers of its soul unfold. Similarly, in the contingent world, the human species hath undergone progressive physical changes and, by a slow process, hath scaled the ladder of civilization, realizing in itself the wonders, excellencies and gifts of humanity in their most glorious form, until it gained the capacity to express the splendors of spiritual perfections and divine ideals and became capable of hearkening to the call of God. Then at last the call of the Kingdom was raised, the spiritual virtues and perfections were revealed, the Sun of Reality dawned, and the teachings of the Most Great Peace, of the oneness of the world of humanity and of the universality of men, were promoted. We hope that the effulgence of these rays shall become more and more intense, and the ideal virtues more resplendent, so that the goal of this universal human process will be attained and the love of God will appear in the utmost grace and beauty and bedazzle all hearts.

EVENTS 1994-95

SEVEN NEW NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

In the spring of 1994, individuals from fourteen countries travelled to Ljubljana, in the troubled region of the former Yugoslavia, to witness and celebrate a birth. Amidst the violence, disintegration, and ethnic conflict that have come to characterize much of the Balkans in recent years, an institution dedicated to unity was formed.

The people who gathered were members of Bahá'í communities in different parts of the world who wished to show their support, members of Bahá'í institutions who had helped nurture the new institution into being, and, most important, individuals from the region who had embraced Bahá'u'lláh's teachings and were eager to establish the administrative body—the National Spiritual Assembly—whose aim it would be to further develop the growing Bahá'í community of Slovenia and Croatia.

At the same time, Bahá'ís in six other countries—all areas facing tremendous social and economic challenges—were engaged in the same process. At Ridván 1994, National or Regional Spiritual Assemblies were elected for the first time in Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Slovenia and

Croatia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. They joined existing National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world, bringing the total number of these vital pillars of the Bahá'í administrative order to 172.

The first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Tajikistan.



The National Spiritual Assembly is one element of a distinctive Bahá'í system of global governance. The administrative order is viewed both as a system for conducting the affairs of the Bahá'í Faith itself and as a promising model for other institutions of administration and governance. Its underlying principles strike a unique balance between individual freedom and the collective good, combining the best elements of grassroots democracy with a facility for worldwide coordination.

The system, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh and further elaborated by His appointed successors, is organized around a set of freely elected governing councils which operate at the local, national, and international levels and are founded on a common set of electoral and decision-making principles. This structure allows individual Bahá'ís to have immediate access to a local decision-making body which hears all ideas and can respond to local needs while at the same time providing for a broader level of coordination and authority regarding issues which affect the nation or the planet.

The initial steps towards the establishment of Local Spiritual Assemblies were taken under the direction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the closing years of the last century. However, it was not

until after the provisions of His will and testament became known in 1921 that Local and National Spiritual Assemblies were finally and systematically established. In this document, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stipulated that the Universal House of Justice would be elected by "secondary Houses of Justice" representing all the countries of the world. The first three precursors of these bodies, designated with the appellation "National Spiritual Assembly" by Shoghi Effendi, were formed in 1923 in the British Isles, Germany and Austria, and India and Burma.

During Shoghi Effendi's 36-year ministry, twelve National Spiritual Assemblies were born, and his rich correspondence with these developing institutions elucidated their purpose and set forth standards for their functioning. Like all Bahá'í administrative organs, National Assemblies act as channels through which the spirit of the Faith can flow and the principles and goals enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh can find practical expression. As such, they serve as a medium for action, their purpose being to stimulate, unify, and coordinate efforts to regenerate individual and community life. The institutions serve as catalysts which help release the dynamic forces latent within the community.

Just as the men and women serving on Local Spiritual Assemblies oversee Bahá'í community affairs within a municipal locality, National Spiritual Assemblies are charged with guiding and coordinating Bahá'í activities within a given country and Regional Spiritual Assemblies within a given region of the world. Their tasks range from coordinating activities for the systematic expansion of the Bahá'í community itself to fostering the initiation and administration of large-scale social and economic development projects; from overseeing relations with their respective national governments to facilitating collaboration with other like-minded groups and non-governmental organizations.

Those electing members of the National Assembly¹ are exhorted to vote for individuals who exhibit a high sense of justice,

1. The nine members of a National Spiritual Assembly are elected by delegates to a national convention who may vote for any adult Bahá'í residing in the country. These delegates are chosen each year in regional elections held throughout the country.

genuine humility, courage, devotion to Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, loyalty to His Covenant, and a well-trained mind. Once elected, members are called upon to set an example of what can be achieved through absolute harmony, mature deliberation, and whole-hearted cooperation. Their actions are guided by their duty to cultivate understanding, facilitate the exchange of views, and deepen the confidence of the people they serve.

While the institution of the National Assembly is invested with the authority to make decisions, individual members do not exercise personal authority but may be designated to carry out certain executive functions. And although authority to coordinate the affairs of the community lies with elected institutions, and Bahá'ís understand that obedience to these institutions is necessary for any coordinated efforts to succeed, it is also understood that the power to advance the Cause ultimately lies with the generality of Bahá'ís. Thus individuals and institutions recognize their mutual interdependence, and join forces to avoid the perils of both overcentralization and anarchy.

In 1963, when 56 Regional and National Spiritual Assemblies had been established across the globe, collectively constituting a wide representation of humanity, the first election was held for the international governing council, the Universal House of Justice. This body then assumed its responsibility for deciding when conditions in a country or region warrant formation of a new National Assembly. The existence of such conditions—which include the freedom of religious communities to function in a given country and sufficient development of local Bahá'í communities—made it possible in 1994 to form the seven new bodies described below.

The New National Spiritual Assemblies in Central Asia

Bahá'ís first settled in Central Asia during Bahá'u'lláh's lifetime, when the region was known as Turkistan. A flourishing community developed, and the first *Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár* (House of Worship) of the Bahá'í world was raised in Ashkhabad in the early part of the century. In 1925, the National Spiritual Assembly of Turkistan, with its seat in Ashkhabad, came into being.

The Bahá'ís of Central Asia obeyed the Soviet government's subsequent ban on Bahá'í institutions and religious practice and



The first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Kazakhstan.

the National Spiritual Assembly was itself dissolved in 1939, but Bahá'ís in the region retained their faith as a matter of private belief and conscience. When the policy of *glasnost* emerged in the 1980s, and then the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, the surviving Bahá'ís began to share their Faith more openly with the help of fellow Bahá'ís from other countries who were then allowed to travel to the region. By April 1992, there were approximately 500 Bahá'ís and eight Local Spiritual Assemblies in Central Asia, and the Regional Spiritual Assembly of Central Asia, with its seat in Ashkhabad, had been re-formed.

During the next two years, dozens of Local Assemblies were elected, summer and autumn schools established, media interviews given, and conferences held. By Rídván 1994, the Faith had grown enough to warrant electing separate National Spiritual Assemblies for each of the republics of Central Asia. Thus new Assemblies were formed in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The development removed the need for a Regional Spiritual Assembly and entitled Turkmenistan to its own National Spiritual Assembly.

The first National Spiritual Assembly of Kazakhstan was elected 30 April 1994. The 120 Bahá'ís gathered were joined by Loretta King, Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre, who represented the Universal House of Justice for the occasion. Mrs. King also represented the House of Justice at the first National Convention of the Bahá'ís of Kyrgyzstan, held 23–24 April in Bishkek. The 150 adults, youth, and children

gathered for the historic event expressed their “deepest gratitude and devotion to the Blessed Beauty, Bahá’u’lláh.”

“Praise and glory, gratitude and thanks, be upon the Threshold of the All-Merciful that in this period of history His gracious favors have been bestowed upon us,” wrote the participants in the first National Convention of Tajikistan, held in Dushanbe 29 April to 1 May. In the presence of a Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre, Shapoor Monadjem, who represented the House of Justice, the delegates consulted, prayed, and elected their first National Spiritual Assembly.

In a message from the first National Convention of Uzbekistan,



The first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Uzbekistan.

held 22–24 April in Tashkent, the 100 participants expressed their “emotion, excitement, and anticipation” to the Universal House of Justice. Referring to a special message sent by the House of Justice to the Convention, participants said “its content uplifted our spirits and drew our attention to our vital responsibilities in ‘serving the people of Uzbekistan through spreading this life-giving message at once challenging and glorious’.”

The National Spiritual Assembly of Cambodia

In 1993, after decades of political instability and turbulence in the southeast Asian nation now known as Cambodia, elections were held and a multi-party liberal democracy under a constitutional monarchy was established. The constitution promulgated in September 1993 guarantees the right to freedom of religious belief and practice. The following month the Bahá’í Faith was



Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm (center) with members of the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Cambodia, Counsellors Lee Lee Ludher (far left) and Shantha Sundram (third from right), and Mrs. Violette Nakhjaváni (third from left).

officially registered with the Ministry of Religion, a major step toward establishment of the first national Bahá’í institution in that country.

Although Bahá’ís first traveled to Cambodia more than 30 years ago to share Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings, they limited their activities to abide by government directives. Many Cambodians, while living in refugee camps in Thailand, found in the Bahá’í Faith principles they felt would help their nation rebuild itself. When they returned, they were able to work with visiting Bahá’ís from Germany, the Philippines, Thailand, and the United States (among other places) and with the National Spiritual Assembly of Thailand to elect Local Spiritual Assemblies.

From 22 to 24 April 1994, more than 200 Bahá’ís, representative of sixteen different nationalities, came together in Phnom Penh to celebrate the election of the first National Spiritual Assembly of Cambodia. The Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm represented the Universal House of Justice for the historic occasion. Participants paid tribute to the Continental Board of Counsellors in Asia, the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá’ís of Thailand and Malaysia, and the Consultative Committee of the Bahá’ís of Cambodia for guiding the community to this point.

The National Spiritual Assembly of Mongolia

The Bahá’í Faith was introduced to Mongolia in 1988 by a young graduate student from Australia who was conducting research on

Mongolian folk music. Sean Hinton spent several prolonged periods in the country, often in remote areas, and the people he met came to know about his beliefs. In 1989, the first Mongolian enrolled in the Bahá'í Faith.

During the following five years, Bahá'ís from Canada, Germany, Malaysia, Switzerland, and the United States visited Mongolia, and Bahá'ís from Australia, Germany, and the United States made Mongolia their home. The Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum visited Mongolia for one week in May 1989, giving a series of lectures about her travels and about world peace to university students. The Bahá'í music group El Viento Canta shared its Latin American rhythms with television and radio audiences as well as concert-goers.

In September 1990, the Bahá'í International Community was invited to send a delegation to the Eighth General Conference of the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace held in the capital, Ulaanbaatar. The delegation delivered a statement called "The Common Goal of Universal Peace in Buddhism and the Bahá'í Faith." A representative of the Council of Religious Affairs of the Government of Mongolia met with a representative of the Bahá'í International Community.

The formation of the first Mongolian Local Spiritual Assembly, in Ulaanbaatar, was reported in April 1992. In 1993 the first Auxiliary Board members were appointed, and a Bahá'í student of Mongolian culture received permission to write about the Bahá'í Faith in the newspaper the *Ulaanbaatar*. During the summer of 1993, Native American dancer Kevin Locke and his



Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum at the first Mongolian National Convention in Ulaanbaatar, April–May 1994.

daughter Kimimila shared Lakota Sioux arts and traditions with Mongolians during a tour arranged by the Ministry of Culture. Their performances, which included explanations of Bahá'í principles, aroused great interest in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. The first Bahá'í summer school was held in August 1993 with participants from five local Bahá'í communities.

Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum returned to Ulaanbaatar 29 April through 1 May 1994 to represent the Universal House of Justice at the country's first National Bahá'í Convention. She was met at the airport by representatives of the national television station and later spoke for nearly two hours at a press conference. Bahá'ís from fifteen countries travelled to Mongolia to witness the election of the first National Spiritual Assembly, and congratulatory messages were sent from all over the world.

The Regional Spiritual Assembly of Slovenia and Croatia

"With tears, emotion, dedication, and love, the Regional Convention of the Bahá'ís of Slovenia and Croatia was inaugurated on the 30th of April in Ljubljana," joyful participants wrote to the Universal House of Justice. The Bahá'ís from Slovenia, Croatia, and fourteen other countries were honored with the presence of Hand of the Cause of God Dr. 'Alí-Muḥammad Varqá. In honor of the event, the Director of the Office of the Religious Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia stated in a letter dated 26 April, "Our hope is that your aspirations for world

The first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Mongolia.



peace, the abolition of racial, religious, class and national prejudices, the establishment of the equality of men and women, and the development of high standards of character will be realized. All the people of goodwill who suffer injustice in the world share these dreams with the Bahá'ís; therefore, a collective effort is needed to achieve your desires."

The Convention celebrated the rebirth of the Bahá'í community of the region. The first seeds of the Faith were sown there in 1928 through the travels of Martha Root, a renowned Bahá'í teacher. At least one Bahá'í family lived in Yugoslavia and steadfastly kept its faith from the 1950s to the 1980s, enduring 30 years of isolation from the worldwide Bahá'í community. By 1986, there were fourteen Bahá'ís in the country. During the years that followed, as foreign visitors, particularly from Austria, were allowed to visit more freely and the Bahá'ís were able to share their Faith more openly, the Bahá'í community in Yugoslavia began to grow steadily.

In 1988, Bahá'ís from different parts of the world participated in conferences in Yugoslavia. These included the International Colloquium on Communication and Culture, in Bled, where the paper "Participatory Radio for Rural Development: The Bahá'í Experiments," was presented; the International Feminist Literature Conference at the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik, where several papers were presented; and the World Esperantist Youth Organization in Zagreb. The visits of Bahá'í music groups El Viento Canta (January 1990) and the Dawnbreakers (November 1991) also contributed to awareness and growth of the Faith.

Although some Bahá'í literature in the languages of the country was printed as early as 1936 (*The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* in Serbian), literature for the most part began being printed in large quantities in 1990. Prayer books in Croatian and Slovene, a statement on Bahá'u'lláh in Serbo-Croatian, and *The Bahá'í Faith in Questions and Answers* in Croatian and Slovene were all made available. A book fair in Belgrade was organized by the Bahá'ís in 1989, and the Bahá'í Book Distribution Service of Austria participated in the 35th International Book Fair in Belgrade in 1990. In April 1991, Bahá'ís took part in another book fair in Zagreb.

The first National Teaching Conference of Yugoslavia was

held in Belgrade in January 1991, preceded by a public event with radio, television, and press coverage. With the political breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991 and the declarations of independence by both Croatia and Slovenia in June of that year, two Bahá'í Regional Teaching Committees were formed to cover the area of the former Yugoslavia: the Regional Teaching Committee of the Bahá'ís of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, and the Regional Teaching Committee of the Bahá'ís of Croatia and Slovenia.

On 23 May 1991, the Local Spiritual Assembly of Ljubljana, Slovenia, was established. In November that year, the Ljubljana Assembly helped organized a peace conference at the University of Maribor. On 10 April 1992, the Bahá'í Faith was officially



The first Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Slovenia and Croatia.

recognized in Slovenia. In 1993, the Government of Slovenia invited the Bahá'ís to submit suggestions concerning the role and task of the new Office for Religious Affairs. By this time, Bahá'í books had been placed in university libraries and were available for sale at public bookshops.

Bahá'ís were able to meet with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia several times and to present him in 1991 with *The Promise of World Peace*. Bahá'í literature was also presented to the President of Slovenia by the Local Assembly of Ljubljana. The first teaching conference was held in the town of Kranj in January 1992. On 7 March 1992, the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Zagreb, Croatia, was elected, and in the summer of 1993, the second Bahá'í summer school was held. Other activities

taking place in Croatia and Slovenia during the eighteen months leading up to the election of the Regional Spiritual Assembly included regular public meetings, celebrations of holy days, several exhibitions on the Faith, and participation in a seminar at the University of Maribor called "Seeking Unity of the Religions."

In a special message to the Bahá'ís of Slovenia and Croatia on the occasion of their first National Convention, the Universal House of Justice wrote, "The intermixture of populations [in the Balkans] requires that ways be found to create harmonious relations between majorities and minorities. This is an area where the Bahá'ís have special opportunities to demonstrate to the world at large the ability of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh to create affection and collaboration between people of diverse backgrounds, to eliminate deeply ingrained prejudices, and to construct the foundation for a peaceful and prosperous society."

The Future

In just over 70 years, a worldwide network of National Spiritual Assemblies has been established. In recent years, the Bahá'ís have been able to raise up these pillars of unity in precisely the areas of the world where political turbulence and ethnic clashes have destroyed existing systems of governance. Members of historically antagonistic ethnic groups have worked side by side to form new institutions dedicated to fostering unity. In some cases, as described above, Bahá'í administrative institutions have re-emerged after decades of being banned, providing evidence of the perennial endurance of the Faith's divine mandate. As Bahá'í communities continue to grow and political boundaries continue to shift, more National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies will be formed, their existence testifying to the truth that humanity is capable of rising to the challenges it now faces; and existing Assemblies will continue to mature to better meet the needs of both the Bahá'í communities and the national communities they serve.

*This article describes Bahá'í involvement
in the United Nations World Summit
for Social Development held
6-12 March 1995 in Copenhagen.*

WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

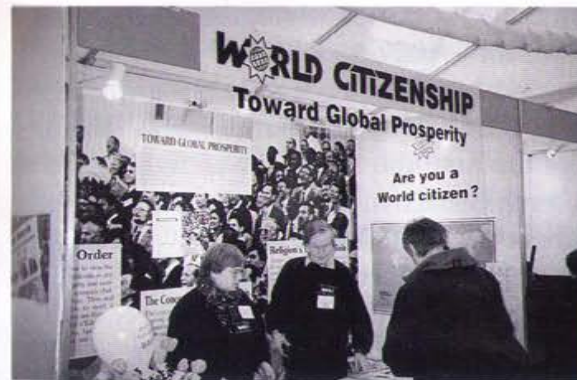
On a gray day in early March 1995, a gavel, that traditional Western symbol of power and order, made a journey that was charged with meaning. It began in the hands of United Nations Ambassador Juan Somavía of Chile as he stood at the podium in the Bella Center in Copenhagen. Ambassador Somavía passed the gavel to a government official standing nearby, who passed it to another, and then another. From there it was given to a representative of a non-governmental organization (NGO), who handed it to the person beside her, and so on down a very long line that snaked all the way through the Center. Eventually the gavel came into the hands of a representative of a women's NGO who, in turn, took it and boarded a bus that carried her to Holmen Island, a recently decommissioned naval base in Copenhagen. There another long line of people passed it hand to hand over a distance of a half kilometer. Finally the gavel reached the speaker at that venue's podium, Jan Birket-Smith, who received it in the name of civil society.

The passing of the gavel, an event conceived and largely accomplished through the efforts of Bahá'ís attending the United

Nations World Summit for Social Development and parallel NGO Forum '95, symbolized the focus and the interconnectedness of the two gatherings. As he handed over the gavel, which had been used by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali several days before to officially open the Summit, Chairman Ambassador Somavía noted that because the central theme of the gathering was about passing power to the people, it was fitting that the NGO Forum's Secretary General, Mr. Birket-Smith, should be its final recipient.

Held 6–12 March 1995, the World Summit for Social Development was the third UN Summit this decade convened at the level of head of state/government, following upon the 1990 Children's Summit and the 1992 Earth Summit. Pressing global problems of poverty, unemployment, and social disintegration were what drew together the 116 heads of state and government who came to the Social Summit to deliberate with other delegates and draft documents formalizing their intentions to address these critical issues. The NGO Forum, which ran 3–12 March, featured more than 1,400 workshops, meetings, and symposia. While UN Summits and NGO Forums are separate events with their own agendas—the Summits provide a venue for government leaders and accredited representatives to hold high-level discussions, and the Forums accommodate a much larger number and variety of organizations and activities—the interconnections between the two were strongly evident in Copenhagen, as epitomized by the symbolic passing of the gavel.

The urgency of the topics was reflected in the large number of participants in the Social Summit. Between 15,000 and 16,000 attended, including the highest number of heads of state and government ever to attend a United Nations conference, as well as some 4,700 government officials representing all 185 member states and several observer states, and 2,315 NGO representatives from 811 NGOs—again, the highest number ever at a UN conference. More than 3,000 press representatives were also accredited. At the NGO Forum, there were approximately 4,500 representatives of NGOs from 2,780 organizations, thousands of government and UN officials, over 4,000 press representatives, and more than 120,000 day visitors.



The Bahá'í International Community booth at the NGO Forum of the World Summit for Social Development featured a display on the concept of world citizenship.

The conditions propelling the unfoldment of the Social Summit are compelling proof that swift, effective, and coordinated action is needed: around the world, more than a billion people live in poverty; approximately 30 percent of the global workforce is either jobless or underemployed; and social disintegration—the general weakening of the social fabric through factors such as racism, ethnic or religious intolerance, and/or rising violence—has become a global problem. Members of the Bahá'í community have long believed what UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali noted in his address to the Summit: that these social problems can no longer be confined within national borders and now require global solutions.

Governments represented at the Summit took a step towards finding those solutions by finalizing and endorsing a Declaration and Program of Action calling for a worldwide people-centered approach to social and economic development. A number of “commitments” endorsed by all signatories included the following goals: “to create an economic, political, social, cultural, and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development”; to eradicate poverty in the world; to make “full employment...a basic priority of our economic and social policies”; to promote social integration; to promote full respect for human dignity and to achieve equality and equity between women and men; to provide universal and equitable access to quality education; to accelerate the economic, social, and human resource development of Africa and the least developed countries; to include “social development goals” in structural adjustment

programs; and to “increase significantly and/or utilize more efficiently” the resources for social development.

Because the ideals underlying these goals are enshrined in the teachings of their Faith, Bahá'ís actively participated in the preparatory process from the time the Summit was first called in 1992. At the national level, Bahá'ís in many countries contributed to the consultations about the Summit, while others participated in the regional UN preparatory meetings conducted around the world, with the result that their contributions influenced concepts and textual revisions to the draft Declaration and Program of Action.

As one of the most widespread and diverse organizations on the planet, the Bahá'í community welcomes collaboration with like-minded individuals, organizations, governmental and UN agencies who share their vision that the principle of world citizenship, based on the concept of unity in diversity, provides a practical foundation for social development. Furthermore, members of the Bahá'í community have experience in their collective and individual lives in applying spiritual principles that address these issues and so constitute a valuable resource for collaborative action.

Bahá'ís believe that a development strategy for the promotion of global prosperity must be based on principles of unity and justice, that it must encompass spiritual and material well-being, and that its success can be measured only by the extent to which the benefits of social and economic development are shared by all the peoples of the world. Thus, the ideas resonating throughout the Social Summit were familiar to them. They welcomed discussion on concepts such as the following: that development must meet both the spiritual and material needs of individuals, families, and communities; that the old economic models, which are ineffective for an increasingly interdependent world, must be replaced by new ones, components of which were offered at the Summit; that there is a growing acceptance that women must participate in all aspects and at all levels of society if development is to be successful; that it is necessary to involve NGOs and members of civil society in all aspects of development policies, from their conception and implementation to their evaluation;

that it is a moral imperative to eliminate poverty in the world; that there is a mounting recognition of our social and spiritual interdependence, and calls are being raised from many quarters for the promotion of the concept of world/global citizenship; that education must help to develop values in students; that work is central to human physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being; and that social integration—the ability of diverse peoples to live together in harmony—is at the very heart of development. The ultimate aim of the Summit was to pursue a coordinated policy to achieve social welfare on a global scale. As the Summit unfolded, it became apparent that the issue of fostering social integration is essential to addressing the other two issues of the conference, poverty and unemployment, and so it became a major focus of the deliberations.

The contributions of the Bahá'í International Community at both the Summit and the NGO Forum were evident in many different ways, from the initial moments of both gatherings. At the Forum opening on 3 March, the world-renowned Norwegian performer of contemporary classical music Anne-Lise Berntsen performed two compositions by Lasse Thoresen, a Norwegian Bahá'í composer, using words from prayers of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Several days later, at the opening plenary of the Summit, a Bahá'í International Community representative, Jaime Duhart, was one of three NGO representatives to make a presentation. Mr. Duhart began the seven-minute address by stating, “The task of creating a global development strategy that will promote the spiritual and material well-being of all the planet's inhabitants constitutes a challenge to reshape fundamentally the institutions of society.” He then went on to outline eleven major concepts critical to the crafting and implementation of such a strategy, including the oneness of mankind, the equality of women and men, practice of the process of consultation, the necessity for a new work ethic and new economic models, and the creation of universal laws and institutions. Referring the assembled delegates to the Bahá'í International Community's statement *The Prosperity of Humankind*, he closed by quoting from Bahá'u'lláh: “Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies

and requirements.' 'Be united in counsel, be one in thought.'"¹

The Bahá'í Community also composed and sent a cable to the heads of state and government assembled at the Summit. Commending them for their efforts "to reach consensus on promoting the spiritual and material well-being of the entire human family," the cable also offered concrete support for the Summit's goals, stating that "the Bahá'í International Community and its 172 national affiliates, representing a cross section of humanity from virtually every nation, culture, ethnic group, class and profession...pledge to work wholeheartedly for the establishment of a just and prosperous world civilization."

Twenty-four National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'í International Community were officially accredited to the Summit: Albania; Austria; Brazil; the Canary Islands; Chile; the Czech and the Slovak Republics; Denmark; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Ireland; Italy; the Netherlands; Norway; Portugal; Romania; Slovenia and Croatia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova; the United Kingdom; and the United States. These representatives actively distributed copies of the Bahá'í International Community statement *The Prosperity of Humankind*, which addresses the issues central to the Social Summit, to the Summit Chairperson and to heads of state and government including the Prime Minister of Spain and the President of Venezuela. Representatives from three Bahá'í-related organizations, Universidad Núr in Bolivia, Women for International Peace and Arbitration based in the United States, and Association bahá'ie de Femmes in France, also officially attended, and a number of individuals formed part of different national delegations or came with other NGO delegations.

In all, some 250 Bahá'ís from more than 40 countries took part in the Forum, constituting the largest and one of the most highly visible delegations—particularly those members who wore the Bahá'í International Community's vibrant blue and white sweatshirts emblazoned with "Bahá'í-Copenhagen '95" and "World Citizenship."

World citizenship became a major sub-theme at the Forum,

1. The full text of this statement appears on pp. 273–296.

where discussions focused on the quest for alternative models of social and economic development tailored to various ecosystems of the planet but also accommodating global coordination and incorporating elements such as democratization and popular participation, appropriate technology, women, indigenous peoples, and education. Accredited Bahá'í delegates interacted with their national delegations to advocate for inclusion of the concept of



Bahá'í youth in front of the European Bahá'í Youth Council booth at the NGO Forum '95 in Copenhagen.

"world citizenship" in the Summit's final Declaration, and a Bahá'í International Community statement on world citizenship that was widely circulated at the Summit and the Forum, in some ten languages, was extremely well received.

The various Bahá'í activities in Copenhagen were coordinated among the Bahá'í International Community's Office of the Environment, its Office of Public Information, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Denmark, and the task force it established for the Summit and Forum. Planning Bahá'í participation involved many volunteers and the close collaboration of numerous institutions, agencies, and individuals, including adults, youth, and children from all over the world. Since all the Bahá'í-sponsored activities featured prominently in the program booklet, they were, without exception, well attended.

The National Spiritual Assemblies of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden held workshops and symposia, as did the Bahá'í International Community, the Bahá'í community of Venezuela, the European Bahá'í Business Forum, and the European Bahá'í

Youth Council. In all, approximately 20 workshops and symposia were sponsored by Bahá'í institutions and agencies, averaging 35 members of the public at each session. Bahá'ís were also invited to be speakers and panelists at ten workshops and symposia sponsored by other NGOs, including the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and the Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences économiques et commerciales (AIESEC). In all, they participated in approximately 40 percent of the workshops and symposia conducted during the Forum. A Bahá'í International Community representative was also active in the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) activities occurring in Copenhagen, including a multireligious service, a symposium, and the drafting of a declaration produced at the Forum by the WCRP. Off-site, an open house held each evening at the Bahá'í Center in Copenhagen was attended by between 80 and 150 people.

Two professional exhibitions, one on social development projects around the world sponsored by the European Bahá'í Youth Council and the other on global prosperity and world citizenship sponsored by the Bahá'í International Community, were visited by tens of thousands of people during the ten days.

A four-day "Children's Forum '95," sponsored by the Bahá'í community of Denmark, featured cultural performances by and for children, an exhibition of children's art, and a panel discussion by young people on issues of the Summit. Children attending the Forum also issued an appeal, entitled "Visions of the Young," to the world leaders at the Summit.

Over a six-month period leading up to the Summit, Bahá'í youth took a leadership role in the development of international youth activities associated with the Summit and the NGO Forum. Bahá'í participants collaborated with sixteen youth organizations to plan a three-day conference, International Youth Consultation on Social Development, where participants conceptualized and drafted the Copenhagen Youth Declaration, which was presented at a Summit Plenary Session. A Bahá'í was responsible for the Youth Caucus Room, and Bahá'í youth conducted an interfaith project on conflict resolution for the International Youth Forum, UFO '95. The spirit of unity and love projected by the Bahá'í

youth at the events in Copenhagen and the unifying effect of their vision resulted in a further invitation from the Director General of Habitat II, the upcoming United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, for Bahá'í youth to become involved in the preparatory process of the event.²

At the 1992 Earth Summit, the Bahá'í International Community was widely hailed for its contributions to the cultural events that occurred at the NGO Forum. The programs in Copenhagen proved to be equally as popular. A ballet entitled "The Refuge and the Cave" was attended by around 1,000 people, and a stand-up comedy and world music show was so popular many were turned away at the door for lack of space. Other well-attended events included a youth-oriented pantomime, called "Flowers of One Garden," by a Bahá'í youth theater group, and a vocalist's performance of West African music.

All of this activity generated considerable media coverage, including television, radio, and newspaper interviews with Bahá'ís. Members of the press, government officials, and attendees also received some 40,000 copies of Bahá'í materials, in ten languages, including the statements *The Prosperity of Humankind* and *World Citizenship*.

From a Bahá'í standpoint, one of the most important elements in the World Summit for Social Development and the NGO Forum '95 was the recognition and inclusion of spiritual and moral values as basic elements of social and economic development. As Ambassador Somavía said at the opening of the NGO



Members of the Norwegian Bahá'í Youth Workshop perform a dance/pantomime at the NGO Forum in Copenhagen.

2. For additional information about involvement of Bahá'í youth in the World Summit for Social Development, see pp. 178–179.

Forum, "All of us have a spiritual ability to change the world, and that is why we are here." This is something that Bahá'ís have long believed.

The Bahá'í International Community's participation in the events in Copenhagen underscores its desire to work with others to promote social changes that will bring peace and justice to all people on our troubled planet. And even if the Summit's Declaration and Program of Action did not fulfill everyone's expectations, the Summit *process* must be seen as a forward step. The world will view poverty differently from now on, and the recognition that the poor must be empowered, not just assisted, which is now mainstream thinking as a result of the Summit, is a revolutionary change in perspective for many of the world's leaders. No doubt, if we continue to collaborate and work towards the lofty goals set forth in the Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action, we will contribute to the progress of that "ever-advancing civilization" about which the Bahá'í sacred writings speak.

UNITY, EQUALITY, SPIRITUALITY:

Bahá'í Contributions to the
International Year of the Family

“All the virtues must be taught the family,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated during one of His many talks delivered in the United States in 1912. “The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed.... Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.”¹

These fundamental truths about the nature and importance of the family formed the basis of the Bahá'í community's efforts to

1. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks delivered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*. Compiled by Howard MacNutt. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 168.

commemorate the United Nations International Year of the Family (IYF) in 1994. At a time when the institution of the family is being severely challenged by the upheavals of the modern age and, in some quarters, by opposition to its very existence, Bahá'ís asserted the critical importance of the family to civilization while urging its remolding according to principles appropriate to humanity's age of maturity. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated more than 80 years ago, family unity does not mean conformity or oppression of individuals. At the same time, the family is an organic entity which each member must nurture if the whole is to prosper. As the most basic unit of society, the crucible in which human beings develop their fundamental attitudes, the family has the potential to bring forth the best in each of its members if the power of its unity is truly harnessed. Conversely, the devastating results of disunity within families are painfully obvious.

In addition to understanding the concept of unity and its profound transformative effects, families must grasp and practice a number of other principles to achieve their potential. Only when families use the tool of consultation, embrace the reality of the equality between men and women, and come to view marriage as a fundamentally spiritual institution will they attain the tranquillity and prosperity that might be theirs. Conviction of the need for humanity to practice these principles motivated Bahá'ís to organize a variety of events in honor of IYF to educate, inspire, and assist both their fellow believers and the general public.

A World Non-Governmental Organization Forum held in Malta in December 1993 launched 1994 as the United Nations International Year of the Family with the theme, "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world." The Bahá'í International Community sent representatives on behalf of its Office for the Advancement of Women and Office of Public Information who contributed to the event by presenting a workshop entitled "Breaking the Equality Barrier: Emerging Roles of Men and Women in Families"; constructing a display featuring the Bahá'í approach to family unity; distributing a new brochure explaining Bahá'í teachings on the subject²; and

2. "The Family in a World Community" is reprinted in *The Bahá'í World 1993-94*, pp. 305-309.

hosting a reception for various participants in the forum. It was the beginning of extensive Bahá'í involvement in a wide range of activities undertaken by local and national communities around the world to observe this important year.

Unity

As stated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the concept of unity—with its implications of harmony, cooperation, and love—lies at the core of Bahá'í teachings about the family. One of the most extreme manifestations of disunity, domestic violence, was addressed by Bahá'ís in several forums during the year. In May 1994, the Bahá'í International Community helped to bring together 40 experts from all over the world and from a diversity of professional disciplines to begin developing an action plan that would



A Bahá'í leads a symposium in Heredia, Costa Rica, entitled "The Family: Source of Well-Being," in June 1994.

help provide concrete and global methods for addressing family violence. Entitled "Strategies for Creating a Violence-Free Family," the two-day symposium in New York City was jointly sponsored with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The participants—from seventeen countries—included representatives from more than 30 NGOs and officials, consultants, and specialists from UNICEF and UNIFEM.

In the keynote address, Canadian psychiatrist H.B. Danesh, who is himself a Bahá'í, examined the causes of violence, describing the "power-based family," which relies heavily on conformity, obedience, and inequality, and the "indulgence-based family," where there is no authority and the individual learns no limits. He then offered the alternative paradigm of the "unity-based family," which is built on conditions of justice for all its

members, is marked by cooperation and unselfish love, and by its very nature is violence-free.

The consultation at the symposium produced a number of insights about the relationship of family violence to society as a whole, and this served to stimulate approaches to action. Participants came to the view that family violence cannot be considered a private matter because its effects have a deep impact on society at large; violence in society and family violence are interrelated; and family violence has deep roots in gender bias. Thus efforts to create violence-free families require the active participation of all social sectors and partnership between men and women.

“What clearly emerged was the importance of looking at the topic not just in a sectorial manner,” said Hlengiwe Mkhize, director of the Children and Violence Project at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. “Usually, psychologists will just talk about trauma, lawyers will talk about human rights, and so forth. But here the consultations emerged from different disciplines and perspectives. And in this there is a new way to look at the phenomenon—an integrated and interdisciplinary way.”

Conclusions and recommendations from the symposium were widely distributed at national and international conferences, such as the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, regional preparatory meetings for the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Argentina, Jordan, and Austria, and a major international conference on family violence held in the Netherlands (see below). The report, translated into French and Spanish, was also shared with the 172 Bahá'í National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world.

Dr. Danesh continued to speak about spousal violence during a series of public talks, workshops, and meetings with various organizations in Singapore in October. Among his activities were meetings with high-level government officials acting on committees responsible for family issues. Also in October, Bahá'ís participated in a conference in the Netherlands entitled “Violence in the Family” sponsored by the International Council of Women. Among the conclusions reached was that the prevention of family violence requires wider social change,

particularly through education in the principle of gender equality.

The Spiritual Assembly of Vancouver, Canada, also addressed family violence. In June, 50 Bahá'í human services professionals gathered to study the Bahá'í writings on human nature and the healing process and to compare this understanding to major therapeutic models. The gathering was intended to begin an ongoing exploration of the topic and to help build a network of Bahá'í professionals involved with the issue. In August, Bahá'ís in Vanuatu addressed a seminar on “Violence and the Family” held at the University of the South Pacific Center. They were invited by the organizers, the Vanuatu Women's Centre, to give the closing speech following a successful seminar on the International Year of the Family offered by the Bahá'ís in May.

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that human beings possess the capacity to transcend the limitations of their own conditioning, to manifest the essential nobility of their spiritual nature, and to contribute to family unity by encouraging each member to develop the virtues which lie within like undiscovered gems. These were some of the truths asserted during a Bahá'í celebration of the human family attended by 175 people on Saltspring Island, British Columbia, Canada, during a weekend in August 1994. Through talks, stories, and a game about expressing emotions within the family, the participants elevated their vision of family unity.

One of the speakers at the Saltspring Island gathering encouraged parents to recognize each other and their children as sacred, spiritual beings. She introduced conference participants to the “Sad, Mad, Glad, Scared” game, in which each family sits in a circle and gives each member a chance to talk uninterrupted. The person talking chooses a card which says either “sad,” “mad,” “glad,” or “scared” and then recounts to the others what experiences in the family bring out such emotions. At the end of the exercise, family members tell each other which virtues they have witnessed being demonstrated.

The Bahá'í vision of the family was explained to more than 200 people gathered in Paris, for the conference “Family: Fortress or Distress?” organized by l'Association bahá'ie de Femmes, l'Association medicale bahá'ie, and the Office of Public Information of the Bahá'í International Community. The event was

Bahá'ís gathered for the International Year of the Family Regional Conference held in Albany, Auckland, New Zealand, in February 1995.



held in the National Senate chambers in the Luxembourg Palace in November and included presentations by the president of the permanent committee of non-governmental organizations at the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the president of the League of Family Associations of Greece, and the president of the United Nations Information Center. Like the family symposium in New York, the gathering in France provided an opportunity for integration of the scientific, humanitarian, and religious domains.

In addition to exploring the importance of unity to the healthy functioning of families, Bahá'í communities created opportunities for families to spend time together celebrating the resources they have in each other. In Australia, the Bahá'í community worked together with the Gold Coast City Council to organize a weekend Family Expo which drew 4,000 people. The November event included entertainment, information stalls, seminars, and international food. "Since the family is the smallest unit in society, our belief is that if we do it right there, we have the energy to face the challenges of the outside world," said Sheri Masroori, one of the organizers. A similar family exposition and picnic was hosted by the Spiritual Assembly of Auckland, New Zealand, in cooperation with the Auckland City Council. More than 2,000 people participated.

Another such festival took place in Macau, where family activities such as story-telling, singing, and games were offered by Bahá'ís in a large park on two consecutive Sundays. In the United Kingdom, the Bahá'ís of North London organized a

public festival which focused on the importance of unity within the family. During the festival, awards were presented for winners of an essay contest on "What is an ideal family and what makes it possible?" Also in the United Kingdom, a family festival was held for Bahá'ís to study family issues and consult together in an environment which welcomed all ages.

The largest of the family festivals took place in Toronto, Canada, in December 1994. More than 10,000 people gathered resources from the 50 display booths, sampled workshops and seminars from among 60 options, and enjoyed entertainment at this multi-faith festival organized to celebrate families from a variety of religious and cultural perspectives. The National Spiritual Assembly was one of 20 cosponsors of the event. Two workshops on conflict resolution within the family were offered by a member of the Bahá'í Family Institute Committee.

Of course, agreeing with the concept of family unity that was celebrated and promoted through the events mentioned is not enough to create or maintain it. A number of other concepts must be understood and principles practiced to create a unified, nurturing family environment. Among these are consultation, the equality of the sexes, and marriage as a fundamentally spiritual institution.

Consultation

True consultation, in which all members of a group are allowed to honestly state their views and all listen with an ear seeking out the truth, is indispensable to family harmony. It fosters unity and is a sign of it. Consultation in the family was the topic of one public meeting held in Zimbabwe in August which was attended by 75 people. Participants included ministry officials who had taken part in a Bahá'í-sponsored seminar called "Revitalizing the Family" earlier in the day. The importance of consultation to family life and the necessary attitudes of patience, respect, and humility which make it successful were also addressed during an observance of United Nations Human Rights Day in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Organized by the Bahá'ís, the event included talks on good family relations and the needs of children, and participants discussed parents' and children's rights and responsibilities.

In the Netherlands, during a Bahá'í summer school that revolved around the theme of family, an afternoon was spent on an exercise intended to engender a better understanding of the dynamic process of consultation. Real families and "mock families" (assembled for the exercise) were assigned tasks ranging from furnishing a living room to establishing a neighborhood project. Using as guidelines the steps of consultation, the families worked their way through the tasks. After successfully achieving their goals, families were able to assess the qualities of each individual that contributed to good communication.

Equality

Although parents and children obviously play different roles in family decision making, the rights of each member to be treated with respect must not be transgressed. In addition, it is imperative that husbands and wives participate on an equal basis in consultation. In fact, all Bahá'í teachings on the family must be viewed within the context of the principle of equality between men and women. Many women who see the family as a repressive institution are actually reacting to a broader system of inequality which forces women to relinquish many aspects of their independence and individuality in order to marry. The family can, and should, be a place where women and men can both freely share their views and can both develop spiritually, intellectually, and socially. 'Abdu'l-Bahá counsels husbands and wives to "abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul."³ They should view each other as helpmates, as intimate friends concerned about the welfare of each other.

Bahá'ís organized numerous activities to promote the principle of equality and the advancement of women (see "Year in Review," pp. 75–132), but at least one conference in particular focused on the reciprocal relationship between the advancement of women and the health of families. "Family in Transition,"

3. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), p. 122.

held in Tirana, Albania, in October, brought together approximately 200 women from ten countries who listened to talks and participated in workshops. "Now I realize," one woman commented at the end of the gathering, "that I continually encouraged my son and told him how much I love him, but with my daughter I only taught her how to work and never told her I loved her."

Marriage as a spiritual institution

Marriage and family life within the context of the practice of equality has the potential to be radically transformed, but only if the purpose for marriage itself is also looked at in a new light. A union between equals who freely choose each other will not bring happiness unless the partners view each other as spiritual beings whose growth will be forever enhanced by the union. Imperfect human beings will always disappoint each other, so a love based solely on appreciation of attractive qualities is bound to dissolve. But individuals who view marriage as a spiritual institution into which they enter with reverence and through whose challenges they may develop as human beings are much more likely to experience love that endures. Marriage is intended to unite husband and wife "both physically and spiritually, that they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other..."⁴

The different stages of love's development, the institution of marriage, the dimensions of love in marriage, and unity in the family were the themes of an institute on family life held in Cameroon in September. Officials from the Ministry of Social and Women's Affairs, who also serve as directors of the Office for the Protection and Advancement of Women and Family, attended the gathering and lauded the initiative of the Bahá'í community. Marriage was also discussed during the first family seminar organized by the Bahá'ís of Bulgaria in June. A press conference held to share results of the conference was attended by 25 journalists. Preparation for marriage and maintaining a strong marriage were topics explored at the Pesnica (Slovenia) autumn Bahá'í school in October 1994.

4. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 118.

Families and Society

Happy families not only conduce to the happiness of their members but also have a profound impact on the wider society. "The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation," 'Abdu'l-Bahá said. "The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of a nation."⁵ If families are not manifestations of harmony, love, communication, and justice, then how can nations hope to achieve these ideals? Conversely, "when relations within the family are conducted with due regard for justice, it will be an important factor in bringing about peace in the world."⁶

This connection between the strength of families and the development of society was explored in a number of settings. "Unity in the Family as a Source of Universal Development," a conference organized by El Salvador's National Bahá'í Committee for Family Development, was held in November. Among the topics discussed were education, the rights of children, elimination of violence, equality of the sexes, and the responsibility of family to society. A conference called "World Peace and the Role of the Family," held in Jammu, India, drew 130 people and was covered by All India Radio of Jammu. A seminar in Tonga entitled "The Importance of Family as the Nucleus of Society" was addressed by Her Royal Highness Princess Nanasipau'u.

"The Family, the World's Most Valuable Resource" was the theme of Finland's Bahá'í summer school in 1994. Presentations focused on various resources within the family, and special aspects of the multicultural family were discussed. A public seminar entitled "The Family, the Cornerstone of Society" was presented by Bahá'í professionals in the fields of psychology and education, a representative from the Consultative Commission on Romany Affairs, and the secretary general of the Finnish Peace Education Institute.

Public conferences on the theme "The Family is a Nation in

5. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 100.
6. Bahá'í International Community, *The Family in a World Community*, 1993, reprinted in *The Bahá'í World 1993-94*, pp. 308.

Miniature" were held in the Seychelles (April 1994) and in Malaysia (September 1994). The former was attended by the President of the Republic, four ministers, and other prominent leaders, and was addressed by the First Lady.

The importance of strong families will become even more critical the closer we get to the year 2000, asserted one of the key speakers at the second annual North American Bahá'í Conference on Social and Economic Development held in Orlando, Florida, USA, in December 1994. In workshops on topics such



Bahá'í youth in Macau dance during an activity organized in August 1994 to celebrate the International Year of the Family.

as marriage, parenting, spiritualizing the household, and raising prejudice-free children, participants in "The Bahá'í Family for the Time of the Lesser Peace"⁷ worked to prepare themselves for the increasingly intense social upheavals destined to accompany humanity's transition to a fundamentally new stage in its development. In an age when the abilities to function harmoniously in groups and to build relationships marked by service, interdependence, and reciprocity are essential, the family must provide the kind of environment in which such capacities are developed.

Other parts of the world where Bahá'ís explored the relationship between families and society included Sri Lanka, where a public meeting commemorating the IYF focused on this theme; the Netherlands, where the Táhírih Institute cooperated with the Utrecht UN-City Foundation to organize a day of the family called "The Family, Cradle of Democracy?"; Uruguay, where a

7. The "Lesser Peace" is a political peace to be established by the nations of the world in order to bring about an end to war.

representative of the National Spiritual Assembly spoke on “The Family: Microcosm of Humanity” during a regional gathering organized by Calidad de Vida (Quality of Life); and Hungary, where the Budapest Symposium on Families as Educators for Global Citizenship was attended by a representative of the Bahá’í International Community Office for the Advancement of Women.

A range of activities

Bahá’í communities on every continent arranged gatherings to examine the interrelated issues that bear on family life. Some brought together Bahá’ís to study and improve their own understanding of the subject in light of Bahá’í teachings, some provided opportunities for Bahá’ís to explore the issues with members of the wider community, and some were organized to inform the public about Bahá’í teachings on the family.

Bahá’í conferences on family life were held in Bolivia, Botswana, Colombia, the Philippines, Spain, and Sri Lanka. “The Family: Our Hopes and Challenges” was the theme of the national conference of the Association for Bahá’í Studies—Australia held in July, and “The Family: A Bahá’í Perspective” was the theme of the Association for Bahá’í Studies—Russia conference in October. More than 50 diverse Bahá’í families from seventeen communities in New Zealand came together in November for a regional conference in honor of the IYF.

Public events such as conferences, seminars, meetings, and panel discussions were organized by Bahá’ís in Cape Verde, Costa Rica, El Salvador, India, and Trinidad and Tobago. Hand of the Cause of God Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum attended a conference in Turkey in April 1994 which drew 350 people. Portions of the conference were aired on television, and supportive telegrams congratulating the Bahá’í efforts were received from the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, and five other government ministers.

An International Year of the Family conference sponsored by the Bahá’í community of Ireland in January 1994 attracted 200 people representing 30 different organizations. Dr. Agnes Ghaznavi, a Bahá’í of Switzerland, was the main speaker at a national

conference in Mauritius attended by 400 people. During her visit to that country, Dr. Ghaznavi presented books on the family to the President of the Republic and the Minister of Education, and she was interviewed for a two-hour television program. State and local government dignitaries in Australia were among those attending an open meeting on the theme of the family held during Australia’s National Bahá’í Convention in May. Monthly talks at a library in France and a series of presentations at schools in Gambia also helped keep the subject in the public eye.

The National Spiritual Assembly of Equatorial Guinea organized five-day seminars in Bata and Malabo, both of which were covered on television. Bahá’ís spoke about family as the basis of society, the importance of education in the family, and the equality of men and women, while a representative of UNICEF spoke about preschool education, and a representative of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities addressed family planning. Summaries of the talks were published in a book produced by the National Spiritual Assembly.

*A banner across
Independence
Avenue in
Windhoek, Namibia,
announces Bahá’í
observance of the Year
of the Family.*



*Counsellor Lally Warren
addresses a gathering of
dignitaries at the
Namibia National
Theater 15 June 1994.
The event was hosted by
the Local Spiritual
Assembly of Windhoek to
celebrate the Year of the
Family.*

In addition to Bahá'í teachings on the family being shared through these various forums for discussion, a statement on the subject was prepared on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand and distributed to community leaders; quotations were distributed to the media



Members of Australia's O.N.E. Dance Theater prepare to perform at a Year of the Family event.

in Greece on International Day of the Family; and a public exhibition displayed in four cities in Mauritius attracted 1,000 visitors. Hand of the Cause of God 'Alí-Akbar Furútan, author of the book *Mothers, Fathers, and Children*, received numerous letters from Russia attesting to the usefulness of the Russian edition of his book, which addresses the spiritual education of children.

A fifteen-minute weekly radio program called "Consejos para la Familia" [Family Counsels] began broadcasting in Equatorial Guinea in July 1994. Produced, directed, and conducted by Bahá'ís, the program covers issues such as health, interpersonal relationships, consultation, equality of the sexes, and children's education.

Bahá'í communities around the world also cooperated with other agencies to cosponsor International Year of the Family events and were invited to participate in activities organized by other groups.

In September, the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Russia, Georgia, and Armenia cosponsored an international symposium called "Family Beyond the Year 2000" along with the Russian Ministry of Health, the Russian Association for Humanistic Psychology, the International Center for Positive Psychotherapy and Transcultural Family Therapy, Moscow State University, the Russian Academy of Education, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the International Association for Ontopsychology. The symposium examined topics such as the elements

of a family-friendly society, the rights and responsibilities of family members, and the relationship between families and larger networks.

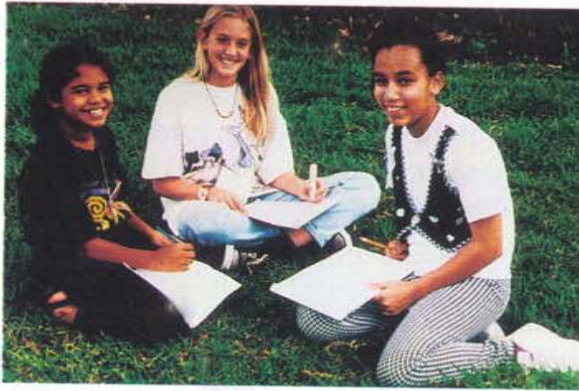
The Bahá'ís of Mauritius worked with eight other religious groups to mount a travelling exhibition on the family that was visited by several thousand people. The exhibit was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, the Minister for Women, and other government officials. The project was one of several initiated by the "Committee of the Wise," a group of 35 representatives of religious organizations—including the Association of Bahá'í Women—appointed by the Ministry of Women to coordinate activities to improve the quality of Mauritian family life.

A Bahá'í exhibit called "The Family in a World Community," which conveyed the principle of unity in diversity in relation to family life, was developed in the Mariana Islands to accompany a travelling exhibit from the Smithsonian Institution. The display included a quilt entitled "Family Reunion" made by the Guam Bahá'í Women's Association from fabric contributed from 50 countries, with all pieces chosen as representative of various indigenous cultures. A "Universal Family Tree" sculpture was created by the Bahá'í children's class of the village of Chalan Pago. Constructed from plaster casting, with masks depicting many different races hanging on the tree, it portrays the diversity of the human family. The unity of the human family was represented through a large book containing family pictures from around the world and quotations from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, such as this statement: "Simply enlarge the circle of the household and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations and you have all humanity."⁸

The Ministry of Community Development of Singapore invited the Bahá'ís to participate in a family day exhibition with a booth, and two Bahá'í quotations were selected for printing on the posters in the Ministry's own display. The Bahá'í community of Omagh, in Northern Ireland, responded to the request by the Omagh District Council that its members create a display to be mounted in the Omagh Leisure Center in honor of IYF. The

8. *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 100.

Participants in a class held during the Rabbani Trust social and economic development conference on the family, held December 1994 in Orlando, Florida, USA.



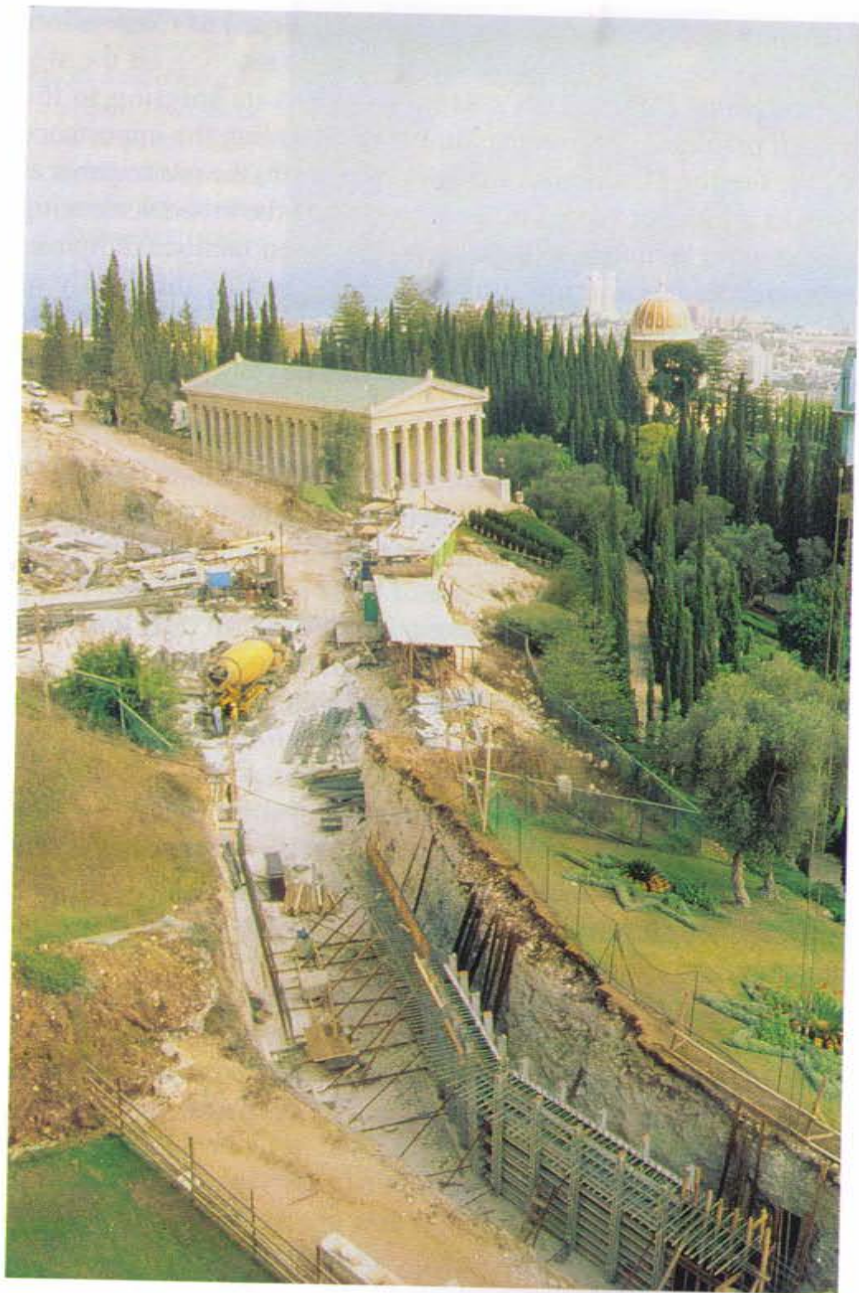
In Namibia, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Africa, Lally Warren, addressed a public meeting on the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and its solution to the varied problems confronting humanity, including the importance of the family. Thousands of miles to the north, the participants at a Bahá'í summer school in Sweden studied the broader meaning of the word "family" by looking at "the seven families of human experience: the interior family, the daily family, the family of friendships, the national family, the international family, the global family, and the Bahá'í family."

Looking ahead

In 1933, in a letter written on behalf of the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, by his secretary, the following was stated: "We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions."⁹ Possibly no institution exemplifies this truth more than the family. The more individuals understand the elements of healthy family life, the more they will be equipped to create healthy families that will benefit entire communities. These communities will, in turn, support families in their efforts to embody unity, consultation, equality, and spirituality.

Given the pivotal role played by families in society, the Bahá'í community will certainly continue its efforts to promote family development long past 1994. Bahá'ís will continue to share Bahá'u'lláh's vision of unity and work with others to make this vision take shape in the world.

9. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual dated 17 February 1933, cited in *Conservation of the Earth's Resources* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 15.



Against the backdrop of the Shrine of the Báb and the International Bahá'í Archives, the service tunnel which will link the buildings on the Arc can be seen under construction.

MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS: Progress 1994-95

The period between Riḍván 1994 and Riḍván 1995 saw several exciting developments in the Bahá'í projects on Mount Carmel. On the one hand, a major hurdle was passed when Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in his capacity as the acting Minister of the Interior, approved the revised town planning scheme accommodating Bahá'í plans for construction on Mount Carmel; with this final stamp of authority, a long process spanning several years of seeking official assent for this undertaking was successfully consummated. On the other hand, commencement of the construction of the Seat of the International Teaching Centre widened the scope of the work, with construction now proceeding on all the buildings on the Arc which are planned to be raised in the immediate years ahead. To handle the tremendous increase in the volume of work this entailed, a team of approximately 220 laborers and about 60 engineers, architects and supervisors working for various contractors and the Mount Carmel Projects management team labored incessantly.

The Seat of the International Teaching Centre, one of the five

buildings around the Arc, is located northeast of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice. Its foundations consist of many large and deep footings ranging in length from 1 meter to 1.8 meters, to accommodate heavy loads and seismic movement of the earth. Excavation of some of these footings and their concreting was carried out between Riḍván 1994 and Riḍván 1995. As well, concreting of the foundations of the perimeter walls of the building and drilling of bore holes for three hydraulic elevators, going down to a depth of approximately nineteen meters, were also undertaken. The structural design of the Teaching Centre, like the Centre for the Study of the Texts, takes into account the fact that the building is to last 500 years. The perimeter walls, elevator and shear walls are the main structural elements which provide lateral stability for the building.



The foundations of the Seat of the International Teaching Centre were complete and its base walls had begun to rise by 22 March 1995.

To generate momentum for the construction of the Centre for the Study of the Texts, the work schedule provided for engineers, backed by a professional project management team, to chart “critical path activities” and to constantly monitor execution. By April 1995 the optimum target of 1,000 cubic meters of concrete pour within a single month was achieved at this site. The structure of the Centre for the Study of the Texts steadily began to rise, and



Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum visits the Centre for the Study of the Texts 17 March 1995.

in some areas reached level six, out of the nine levels which constitute the building. The contract for the marble for this building, as well as for the International Teaching Centre, was also signed during this period, signalling a new phase in these projects—commencement of finishing works for the buildings on the Arc. The procurement of the other finishing materials for the electrical and mechanical services also commenced around the same time.

Construction of the main portion of the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the parking building, a facility shared by and connected to both the extension to the existing International Bahá'í Archives and the Centre for the Study of the Texts, proceeded simultaneously. Of the five levels of the parking building, three were constructed during this period, and excavations were made for a tunnel which will provide vehicular access.

The extension being built to the Archives Building is to provide accommodation for the central office of the ever-growing

The complex of structures comprising the Centre for the Study of the Texts, the Archives Extension and the parking building cover approximately 16,560 square meters of floor area, in nine storeys.



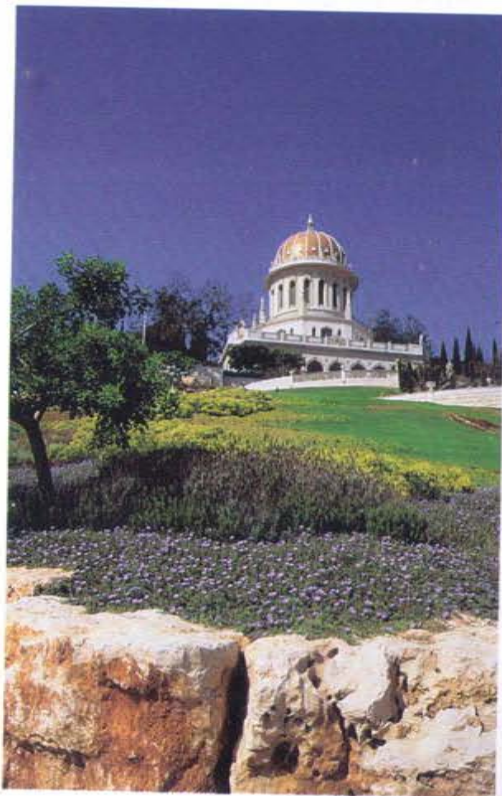
Eight marble columns in the Ionic style will beautify the circular entrance portico of the Centre for the Study of the Texts when it is complete.

Archives at the World Centre. It will be set up with state-of-the-art conservation equipment for the preservation of the sacred writings and holy relics of the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith. The Archives Extension is a four-storey underground building juxtaposed between the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the International Bahá'í Archives. Its roof will eventually be landscaped to blend with the gardens around the upper Arc path. By April 1995 all the four floors were completed and work commenced on putting its roof in place.

Rapid progress was made in pursuance of one of the goals of the Three Year Plan to complete seven terraces below the Shrine of the Báb. In particular, terrace nine immediately below the Shrine presented a preview of what the terraces will look like

when completed, with the stone balustrades in place on its contour walls, along with the ornamental planter urns and other stone statuary. The central stairway which constitutes the "Kings' Pathway" was also covered with stone from terraces nine to five, and the water pools were constructed in concrete and laid with stone. The shape of terraces three and four became clearly delineated when the precast gutters and geometric curves were put in place.

In conjunction with the architectural work, the greening of the area was done simultane-



A view of the Shrine of the Báb showing the trees and wildflowers planted on the terraces below.



Balustrades from Israeli stone cut and polished in Italy comprise one of the principal adornments for the terraces of the Shrine of the Báb.

ously, and the areas on both sides of the central stairway were laid with sod. Trees and wildflowers were also planted on the west side of the stairway.

Work proceeded expeditiously on the terraces above the Shrine of the Báb, and the entire site began to take shape. The construction of the concrete mechanical rooms was completed on terraces fifteen to eighteen, and extensive drainage work on the inner zone of these terraces as well as the east side was completed. Work then began on the west side where irrigation lines and electrical duct banks were laid out. In addition, due to the steepness of the mountain ranging from 45° to 60°, gravity walls were constructed along with the underground retaining walls to provide these terraces' gravity support.

An important step in the Terraces Project was the development of the design of the bridge over Hatzionut Avenue which will link the terrace of the Shrine of the Báb with terrace eleven just above. The bridge is designed in the shape of a trapezoid with the wide end towards terrace eleven and the Arc. The edges of the bridge are located in such a way that when one walks down the outermost path, one's sight is focused on the majestic

Shrine, and attention is also drawn to the historic grove of cypress trees where Bahá'u'lláh stood and pointed out to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the spot where the remains of the Báb should be laid to rest. The basic idea for its design is to make the bridge appear as a continuation of the gardens, which have been raised up and extended across the road in such a way that a person crossing it may not notice the traffic on the road below. There will be wide lawn areas and flower beds, and along the two edges of the bridge sheared cypress trees will be planted in a raised planting bed. Several ornaments will adorn this new garden design.

The building of this bridge will require the lowering of Hat-zionut Avenue by several meters. This in itself will be a major undertaking, and coordination has begun with various municipal departments, as several underground services, such as water pipes, drains, telephone and electrical cables, need to be relocated.

The preparation of designs for two spaces—a public information center and security center, to be located under terrace eleven—were also being pursued during this period.

Another very significant development on the Terraces Project was the razing of several buildings on Bahá'í property at the foot of Mount Carmel, “thus opening the way for the completion of the lower terraces of the Shrine of the Báb.”¹ According to the Universal House of Justice, “The action...taken with the full cooperation of the city authorities harmonizes with the intention of the beloved Guardian: it clears the site for the monumental entrance to the majestic path leading from the southern end of Ben Gurion Avenue up to the central edifice of the Shrine and beyond to the crest of God's Holy Mountain.”²

Simultaneous with the Bahá'í building program, the Land Authority of Israel, the Ministry of Tourism and the Municipality of Haifa are together carrying out a project which conjoins the site of terrace one at the foot of Mount Carmel. The project involves the restoration of the German Templar houses along Ben Gurion Avenue and a general beautification of the area—“a

scheme that will ensure,” in the words of the Universal House of Justice, “an uninterrupted vista of splendor northward from the Terraces to the sea, towards Bahjí.”³ It may be recalled that the



On 31 March 1995, several buildings on Bahá'í property were razed to make way for the construction of the first two terraces below the Shrine of the Báb.

German Templers foregathered in the Holy Land in the very year of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration in Baghdad (1863) to await the return of Christ.

Along with the restoration of the German Templer Colony, Israeli authorities also plan to open up the harbor front, which in reality fulfils the vision of 'Abdu'l-Bahá who envisaged the Kings' Pathway beginning from the sea and leading up to the Shrine of the Báb.

Project details for the restoration were taken up in earnest and a steering committee was constituted by the government of Israel to expedite its implementation. The architect and project manager of the terraces, Fariborz Sahba, was invited to serve as a member of this committee and as the chief advisor of the municipality of Haifa for the restoration project. The other four members of this committee are the city engineer of Haifa, the general manager of the Ministry of Tourism, the general manager of the Israeli Land Authority and the general manager of Haifa Economic Corporation.

Throughout the year, the Mount Carmel Projects received dignitaries and officials from Israel and overseas. On 13 June 1994, the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, accompanied

1. Letter from the Universal House of Justice dated 4 April 1995 to all National Spiritual Assemblies.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

by the Mayor of Haifa and several other dignitaries, viewed the models of the terraces and was escorted to terrace nine below the Shrine of the Báb which provides a perspective of the lower terraces right down to the Templer Colony avenue. On 4 August 1994 Shimon Peres, Israel's Foreign Minister, with his entourage, was joined by the Mayor of Haifa in touring the construction site of the terraces. A slide presentation and a tour of the models in the Seat of the Universal House of Justice were also included during this visit. Later in the year, the Minister of Tourism in Egypt and the Egyptian Ambassador to Israel came to see the site in the company of the Minister of Tourism in Israel, the Mayor of Haifa, and 22 other officials from Egypt, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Haifa Municipality. An eminent economist from Jerusalem was commissioned by the Haifa Economic Corporation to study tourism prospects in Haifa in the immediate future and its impact on the economy of the city; the Terraces Project was considered a major factor providing one of the most attractive opportunities to contribute to the prosperity of the city. He visited the Bahá'í World Centre and viewed the models of the projects.

Inasmuch as the Mount Carmel Projects have been undertaken to realize the spiritual vision of the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith, their physical grandeur has caught the attention of the people at large. Hence, the projects continued to be reported in the media during the year. The interest that the projects have generated among the residents of Haifa in particular was

During his visit to the Bahá'í World Centre on 4 August 1994, Shimon Peres, Foreign Minister of Israel, views one of the models of the Terraces Project.



A view of the finished terraces below the Shrine of the Báb.

highlighted by an article which appeared in one of the national newspapers of Israel with the headline "Hundreds of investors are interested in the projects of Haifa." The article continued: "One of the projects attracting them is the...Hanging Gardens project, which is being built by the Bahá'ís and shall turn Haifa into a national tourist center."

For the Bahá'ís of the world, the implications of the developments on Mount Carmel can be summed up in the vision of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, given more than 60 years ago. "This vast and irresistible process," Shoghi Effendi wrote when explaining the significance of the raising up of buildings that will constitute the world administrative seat of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, "...will synchronize with two no less significant developments—the establishment of the Lesser Peace and the evolution of Bahá'í national and local institutions."⁴

4. From a letter of Shoghi Effendi dated 27 November 1954, published in *Messages to the Bahá'í World 1950–1957*, 2d ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 74.



From top to bottom: Audience members at the International Music and Drama Festival in Harare, Zimbabwe, enjoy the performances; children attend a summer program at the Green Acre Bahá'í School in Eliot, Maine, USA; and students learn agricultural skills at the New Era Development Institute in Panchgani, India, all during 1994-95.



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Riḍván 1995 marked the end of the second year of the Three Year Plan for expansion and consolidation of the worldwide Bahá'í community. The range and number of activities undertaken to further the aims of the Plan expanded rapidly, making it increasingly difficult to render a complete record of events. The following is not intended therefore to be comprehensive but rather includes news items chosen to reflect the wide variety of cultures in which Bahá'í principles are finding enthusiastic supporters and to provide highlights of the manifold efforts being made to apply these principles to the challenges of the day.

The material has been arranged under the following headings: dignitaries and media representatives visit Bahá'í World Centre, sharing the message of Bahá'u'lláh, prominent people, indigenous peoples, book fairs, Bahá'í scholarship, Bahá'í community life, race unity, advancement of women, environment, health care, education, other areas of involvement, development conferences and agencies, interfaith dialogue, and recognition.

Several areas of activity which would generally be included in "The Year in Review" are this year covered in separate articles: the formation of seven new National Spiritual Assemblies (pp. 25–36), Bahá'í contributions to the World Summit for Social Development (pp. 37–46), Bahá'í contributions to the International Year of the Family (pp. 47–63), activities of the Bahá'í International Community (pp. 139–150), media coverage of the Bahá'í Faith (pp. 151–166), Bahá'í youth (pp. 167–190), and the Bahá'í Faith and the arts (pp. 243–272).

Dignitaries and Media Representatives Visit Bahá'í World Centre

During the period under review, there was a sharp increase in the number of visits to the Bahá'í World Centre of high-ranking government officials, other dignitaries, and media representatives. Such a trend reflects the growing significance of the spiritual and administrative center of the Faith in the eyes of the world.

On 22 and 23 July 1994, the President of the Republic of the Seychelles, His Excellency France Albert René, was welcomed to the World Centre for consultations with the Universal House of Justice. These discussions, requested by President René, lasted just under two hours and dealt with issues affecting global peace and challenges facing the Seychelles, the Indian Ocean, and the world.

The President was accompanied by his wife, Sarah, their young daughter, Ella, and Mrs. René's parents, Abdul Rahman and Munira Zarqani. During the course of the two days spent at the World Centre, the presidential



His Excellency France Albert René, President of the Republic of the Seychelles (right), leaving the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh.

party visited the Shrines of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, as well as several other Bahá'í holy places. A formal dinner, graced by the presence of the Hands of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum and 'Alí-Akbar Furútan, was offered in His Excellency's honor in the banquet hall of the Seat of the House of Justice. On this occasion, as throughout the visit, President René expressed a lively appreciation of the relevance of the Bahá'í teachings and of the contribution that the Seychellois Bahá'í community is making to his country.

The Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, visited the Bahá'í World Centre briefly on 13 June to view models of the Terraces Project underway on Mount Carmel (see also p. 72). He was escorted during his visit by project manager and architect Fariborz Sahba and the Deputy Secretary General of the Bahá'í International Community, Albert Lincoln.

Shimon Peres, Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs, made an official visit to the World Centre on 4 August 1994. Following an audio-visual presentation on the status of the Mount Carmel Projects, Mr. Peres was introduced to members of the Universal House of Justice and invited to a luncheon in his honor in the banquet hall of the Seat. The party was joined by the Mayor of Haifa, Amram Mitzna. Mr. Peres ended his visit by viewing the Terrace Projects in progress and paying his respects at the Shrine of the Báb.

The Vice President of the Dominican Republic, Jacinto Peynado, visited the Bahá'í World Centre with his wife and a special delegation in February 1995.

Among the other government officials who visited the Bahá'í World Centre during 1994–95 were Israel's Minister of Education and Culture, Professor Amnon Rubinstein, in May 1994; Egypt's



Project manager Fariborz Sahba shows Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin models of the Terraces Project during Mr. Rabin's visit to the Bahá'í World Centre.

Minister of Tourism, Mamdouh Lel Beltagi, in September 1994; Russia's Minister of the Interior, Viktor Yerin, in October 1994; a group of Canadian members of Parliament in November 1994; and New Zealand member of Parliament Geoffrey Braybrooke in January 1995.

Ambassadors from Bolivia, Egypt, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic, the United States, and Venezuela were also welcomed. In addition, special visits were conducted for a variety of prominent people representing different sectors of society, such as the business and arts communities. In January 1995 a delegation from the Shanghai People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries was received.

Among the media representatives to visit were a film crew from Austrian National Television (ORF), a film crew from the Discovery Channel based in the United States, the head of media services for the government of Vanuatu, a journalist for Romania's daily state newspaper, a writer from the magazine *The World and I* (produced in the United States), and the president of the *Jerusalem Post*.

Sharing the Message of Bahá'u'lláh

For eight years, the villages of Iku I and Iku II in Nigeria vowed not to share anything in common, including farming, trading, and drinking from the same stream. In December 1994, the Local Spiritual Assembly of Owom determined to bring these villages the Bahá'í message of the unity of mankind. After its representatives visited every house, including those of the village heads, the two villages decided to become one and formed one Local Spiritual Assembly to govern their affairs.

It is such experiences with the unifying power of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh that inspire Bahá'ís as they carry out their duty to share His teachings with a conflict-ridden world. Having no clergy, the Bahá'í Faith grows through the efforts of individual Bahá'ís to educate the public about the principles and divine power brought by Bahá'u'lláh.

Although Bahá'ís are forbidden to proselytize, they are enjoined to be systematic in their presentation of the Faith to as many receptive people as possible. Thus regular "teaching



Five people staff a Bahá'í information booth in Perth, Western Australia, in January 1995.

conferences" are held to study this duty and to make plans of action. Teaching projects bring together groups of Bahá'ís, often from disparate locations, to proclaim the Faith. In addition, all believers are responsible for striving to demonstrate the truth of the Faith through their behavior and for explaining the divine origin of their beliefs to those with whom they come in contact.

Among the numerous teaching conferences held in 1994–95 were the first national teaching conference in Cambodia and the first regional conference in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The 500 Bahá'ís attending a national teaching conference in Kienibeu, south Tarawa, Kiribati, in October, were honored by the presence of the country's President. During the opening ceremony, President Teburoro Tito said that he and his government support the work of the Bahá'ís because he believes that Bahá'í initiatives are not done only for the religion but for the improvement of the nation as a whole.

Various creative approaches were used to share the message of Bahá'u'lláh as widely as possible. In April 1994, the National Office of External Affairs of the Bahá'ís of Peru placed an article called "A Message to Peru" in the newspaper *El Comercio* and in the magazine *Somos*, inviting people to contact the Bahá'í community for information. During the month of June, nine African American women travelled throughout southern Africa as part of the Zlmarian Walker Sister-to-Sister Travel Teaching Project. In South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, and Botswana, they spoke to students' and women's groups, met with local leaders,

appeared on radio and television shows, and gave presentations concerning the Bahá'í writings relating to the United Nations Year of the Family. Also during the summer of 1994, a group of Bahá'ís sailed their boat *Wind Dancer* to small communities in southeastern Alaska, speaking about the Bahá'í Faith and giving away copies of prayers at each stop.

The Call of the Hands Teaching Project brought travelling Bahá'í teachers, many of whom are professionals in the fields of education and the environment, to Siberia, the Ukraine, and Moldova for nearly two months during the summer of 1994. Bahá'í teachings were offered through public forums on "Family, Education, and the Environment," and meetings were arranged

Members of the Sister-to-Sister Travel Teaching Group taught the Bahá'í Faith in southern Africa in June 1994.



with professors, government officials, school administrators, and environmental groups. Numerous press interviews took place, many lasting more than three hours.

Teaching continued in areas of the world associated with images of war and political instability. In Croatia, information displays were staffed and public talks presented in at least two regions throughout the year. In May, Bahá'ís from four cities travelled to Split for the project; in September Bahá'ís from as far away as Zimbabwe and the United States arrived to help distribute open letters and make presentations to city officials. In February 1995, the city of Rijeka was the site for public lectures on "The Spiritualization of Society: What Can the Individual Do?", "A Spiritual Family in the Modern World: Is it Possible?",



Four of the five members of a teaching team in Fougamou, Gabon, in 1994.

and "Global Social and Economic Development: Do We Need a New Ethic?"

Despite conditions in Tajikistan such as lack of safety and lack of food following civil wars, the Bahá'í community actively promulgated the message of Bahá'u'lláh. The first Bahá'í summer school of Tajikistan was held in August, the National Spiritual Assembly printed and distributed 5,000 copies of *The Hidden Words* in the Tajiki language, and 29 Bahá'ís from Tajikistan pioneered or travelled to teach.

In the wake of the tribal conflict in Rwanda which erupted into massacres of disastrous proportions, the Bahá'í community of Bukavu, Zaire, responded by doubling its efforts to spread Bahá'u'lláh's message about the oneness of mankind. Groups were formed to proclaim the Bahá'í teachings to journalists, to visit and teach people in hospitals, to organize youth activities, and to celebrate the International Day of Women. With the approval of the headmaster of one secondary school, the Bahá'ís of this community began visiting classes to discuss peace, reaching 500 students by Riḍván 1995.

Some of the most dramatic responses to teaching efforts occurred in Asia and Africa. When 50 Bahá'ís visited Twante, Myanmar, for three days, a total of 340 individuals in sixteen localities declared their faith in Bahá'u'lláh. In March 1995, a group of 60 Bahá'ís taught the Faith for two days in the Nyaung-gon Yangon Division, and 255 people in eighteen localities enrolled in the Bahá'í community. Another teaching trip in March resulted in the declarations of faith of 115 people.

In India, where there are more than 2.5 million Bahá'ís, enrollments continued. When the Bahá'ís of Tamil Nadu, for example, proclaimed the Bahá'í teachings to ten villages in the Sivakasi area, 175 people joined the community. In Turkey, hundreds attended public meetings organized to educate people about the Bahá'í Faith. A forum on "The World of the Future" held in November at the Cultural and Art Center in Kadiköy, Istanbul, drew 200 people, including several reporters. "Women in the New World Order" was the theme of the second meeting held in December in Bursa and attended by 150 people. Cables were received from the Deputy Prime Minister and several other government ministers with warm wishes for the forum.

Receptive souls in Gabon, Niger, Togo, and Zambia were among those in Africa who responded enthusiastically to Bahá'í teachings. In Gabon, five teaching teams were formed as part of the Muhájir Teaching Project, and 200 people joined the Faith. The Bahá'ís of Niger reached the midpoint of the Three Year Plan with 500 more members in their community after pursuing a systematic teaching plan. In Togo, just eight Bahá'ís brought the Faith to more than 500 new believers during two weeks of teaching in the N'gamgam tribal area. More than 220 people enrolled in the Bahá'í community in Zambia during a six-week period in the Isobel Sabri Teaching Campaign.

The Dr. Muhájir South Plateau Long-Term Teaching Project in Nigeria was responsible, as of March 1995, for bringing 2,000 people into the Bahá'í community and helping to form 42 Local Spiritual Assemblies. "Lots of people are now really falling in love with the Bahá'í Faith," related a message from

A mobile
Bahá'í
Information
Center in
Hamilton
County,
Tennessee,
USA.



the Board of Counsellors. "When asked why, they maintain that the Bahá'í Faith does not condemn their good cultures but rather has a lot in common with their cultures...."

Many teaching projects around the world were organized or carried out primarily by youth. For more information on these activities, see "Bahá'í Youth: 'A New Kind Of People,'" pp. 167-190.

Numerous people first became aware of the Bahá'í Faith through hearing of the persecutions of Bahá'ís in Iran which intensified beginning in 1979. The world's continuing concern since that time and efforts made by governments to condemn the persecutions are partially responsible for keeping the Faith in the public consciousness. The 1993 book *Olya's Story*, written by a woman who endured imprisonment and narrowly escaped execution in Iran for her religious beliefs, touched the hearts of many as it described the strength of faith which allowed love to survive despite severe physical and emotional tests. During 1994-95, Olya Roohizadegan continued travelling to speak about the themes of her book. In the United States, at least 110 people embraced the Bahá'í Faith as a result of her extensive speaking tour. "Her story," noted a fellow Bahá'í, "the triumph of love over bigotry, hatred, and intolerance, is a miracle of the spirit of the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh."

Prominent People

As leaders of thought in all sectors of society struggled to address the problems confronting humanity at this critical stage in history, Bahá'ís arose to inform them of the principles which they are convinced must enter the conversation if solutions are to be found.

The President of the Marshall Islands, Amata Kabua, who visited the Bahá'í World Centre in 1990, was greeted by Bahá'í communities during his 1994 travels to Hawaii, Korea, and Papua New Guinea. During a luncheon with Bahá'ís in Hawaii, the President spoke highly of his hopes for Bahá'í involvement in the educational system of the Marshall Islands, urged the Bahá'ís to develop a regular radio program in the Marshall Islands, and paid tribute to the Bahá'í teachings. During a reception in Papua New Guinea for the President, which was attended by officials

from both countries, President Kabua said that he was convinced that only Bahá'ís have the solutions to the problems of the world and tools for establishment of world peace.

The President of Dominica, Crispin Sorhaindo, invited a representative of that country's National Spiritual Assembly to meet with him in December 1994. The secretary of the Assembly, Sandra Cooles, discussed the Bahá'í Faith with the President for 40 minutes and later presented him with books he had requested.

Members of the Bahá'í community of Vanuatu met with

Hugh Adamson, representing the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom, is introduced to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at a service for Commonwealth Day, Westminster Abbey, London, March 1995.



President Jean-Marie Leye in the fall of 1994, and he expressed his gratitude for the social and economic development projects being undertaken in his country. In March 1995, President Leye and his wife attended the Bahá'í celebration of Naw-Rúz held at the national chief's *nakamal* (meeting house) in Port Vila.

Other officials also attended Bahá'í holy day celebrations. The former President of Singapore, Dr. Wee Kim Wee, his wife, ambassadors, high commissioners and members of the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony attended Singapore's 1995 Naw-Rúz celebration. The President of the Albanian Parliament, Pjeter Arbnori, was among the more than 120 guests at the 1994 celebration of Riđván in Tirana. In Swaziland, representatives of government ministries were present at a dinner in honor of the Anniversary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh in November 1994. Political, administrative, and military authorities in Zaire took part in Naw-Rúz festivities in Kinshasa.

Bahá'í delegations or representatives were received by the President of Mauritius in June 1994; the Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea in May 1994; the Premier of Taiwan in December 1994; and the Minister of the Interior Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany in January 1995.

A variety of community leaders such as government ministers, newspaper editors, and prominent lawyers became acquainted with the Bahá'í Faith in Gambia when the Bahá'í community presented them with excerpts from the statement *The Prosperity of Humankind*. The excerpts had been printed in the *Point* newspaper in March 1995.

Indigenous Peoples

After participating in a wide range of activities to mark 1993 as the United Nations International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples, Bahá'í communities continued their efforts as the International Decade for Indigenous Peoples was launched in December 1994. Bahá'ís of different backgrounds shared their beliefs around the world using their own particular traditions of communication, hospitality, and artistic expression to convey the message. As more people responded and the number of indigenous peoples joining the Bahá'í Faith increased, Bahá'í community life slowly evolved to reflect important contributions of multifarious cultures. At the same time, Bahá'ís raised voices of encouragement and advocacy in the wider community to promote the importance of supporting the contributions of diverse peoples to the advancement of civilization.

Afemata Moli Chang, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Australasia and a traditional leader of Western Samoa, travelled throughout the Micronesian Islands to tell other traditional leaders about the Bahá'í Faith. During his visit to the Marshall Islands, he was officially received by the president of the Council of Paramount Chiefs in Majuro, Iroijlaplap Kotak Loeak. In the Western Caroline Islands, he accepted a request for a meeting from the Council of Pilung, the highest ranking council of traditional leaders in Yap, to whose members he spoke about the special mission of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Islands to promote peace and a way of life based on cooperation.

In Palau, Mr. Chang was invited to dinner by the President, Kuniwo Nakamura, and he met with two of the country's High Chiefs. A well-attended public meeting in Guam preceded his travels to the Eastern Caroline Islands, where he met with traditional leaders of Kapinga, Pohnpei.

Mr. Chang's travels were part of an ongoing campaign called "Ocean of Light" taking place throughout the Pacific. As part of this campaign, the Bahá'ís of Samoa welcomed the Queen of Mangaia in the Cook Islands and 32 members of her entourage who visited Princess To'oa Tosi Malietoa and the rest of the Bahá'í community in May 1994. The Ocean of Light Conference in Kiribati in October was marked by elaborate traditional dancing and joyful singing and was honored with the participation of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Elena Marsella. Mrs. Marsella opened the four-day event by presenting Bahá'í literature to President Teburoro Tito and Vice President Tewareka Tentoa. Traditional leaders in Papua New Guinea also learned about the Bahá'í Faith through a series of projects in the Karkar Islands, Lende, and Mt. Brown.

When a group of Maori Bahá'ís from New Zealand took the initiative to visit Vancouver, Canada, in May, they found common ground among Native Canadians, who were touched by the spirit of the visitors. Similarly, a gathering of Hopi elders in Arizona, USA, warmly received a Bahá'í teacher from a Lakota Sioux background who spoke to them about the message of Bahá'u'lláh. A group called INKA (Intertribal Native American Kit of Artists) spent much of the year proclaiming the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith throughout the Chicago area using Native American music and dance.

Many members of indigenous groups not only listened receptively to presentations about the Bahá'í Faith but fully embraced their truth, often recognizing the coming of Bahá'u'lláh as fulfilment of an age-old expectation. An historic moment occurred in New Zealand when nine Maori members of the Ratana Church discovered the truth of Bahá'í teachings. According to Ratana tradition, which began earlier this century as people began following the call of T.W. Ratana to respiritualize their lives, a number of young people are chosen in each generation



Participants in the Ninth Spiritual Gathering of the Tribes, held at Soto, near Yakutsk, Siberia, in June 1994, wear traditional Sakha attire.

to be fully educated in the Faith and become leaders of their time. Recently, in order to build bridges of friendship and to look at what other religions could offer their own, these "apostles" began investigating other religions. Upon discovering the Bahá'í Faith, three of the apostles and several other Ratana members requested a nine-day institute to become immersed in its teachings. By the end, nine, including the three apostles, had declared their faith in Bahá'u'lláh and arisen to take the religion to the rest of their people.

As more members of indigenous cultures accepted the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'í community life increasingly reflected their unique contributions. The Hawaii National Teaching Conference held in September 1994 was marked by an unprecedented level of participation by indigenous believers. The Ninth Spiritual Gathering of the Tribes in Siberia united indigenous peoples, including Bahá'ís, from Alaska, Canada, the United States, and Siberia for eight days of sharing traditions and perspectives.

Bahá'í communities tried to serve indigenous communities by supporting their efforts to unite in harmony with people of other backgrounds while maintaining the right to express their own cultures. In May 1994, a special service was held at the House of Worship in Australia in honor of the Week of Prayer for Aboriginal Reconciliation. Before the service, an Aborigine gave a talk about the history and culture of the Aborigines and their need to live in a harmonious society. Later in the year, the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia presented to the chairman of the

Aboriginal Reconciliation Council a statement on the Bahá'í approach to Aboriginal reconciliation.

Book Fairs

In efforts to familiarize more leaders of thought and book buyers with Bahá'í literature, and to make it more widely available to the public, Bahá'í Publishing Trusts and communities took part in book fairs.

Books on education, personal and social development, philosophy, and the arts were selected for the Bahá'í exhibit on the theme of "civilization" at the Beijing International Book Fair. Senior representatives of government agencies, national and international press, academic institutions and the publishing world, writers, artists, students and members of the general public all attended the Fair, which was held in September 1994. The International Association of Bahá'í Publishers arranged the Bahá'í display, which included colorful banners with quotations from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh in Chinese and maps showing the distribution of Bahá'í publishing agencies around the world.

The Bahá'í author of the book *Nova Ordem Mundial, Novos Paradigmas* [New World Order, New Paradigms], Washington Araujo, was one of 62 Brazilian writers who participated in the 46th Frankfurt International Book Fair in Germany, which focused on Brazil. The fair, held in October 1994, provided Mr. Araujo an opportunity to present his book to the Brazilian minister of culture, other government authorities, prominent writers and editors, and two professors of Brazilian literature. The book presents many issues related to the Bahá'í Faith and dedicates a chapter each to Bahá'u'lláh and to divinely revealed laws.

In March 1995, the Bahá'í Publishing Trust of the United Kingdom was represented at the 12th International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books, held in London. The biennial event provided a chance for more than 2,000 publishers, writers, media commentators and booksellers from Britain, North America, the West Indies, and Africa to become more familiar with Bahá'í publications, particularly those addressing racial harmony and equality.



In Zaire, an exhibit of Bahá'í books and photographs was visited by more than 1,500 people during the women's gathering organized by African Horizons at the People's Palace.

The Zimbabwe International Book Fair held in Harare in August 1994 focused on the theme "Science and Technology." The Bahá'í exhibit included a large double-sided timeline showing the parallel relationship between the events marking the development of science and the Divine Revelations of the world's religions. Also in Africa, Bahá'ís put together an exhibit for Tanzania's National Book Fair held in Dar es Salaam in November/December 1994.

The Bahá'ís of India continued to take part in a number of regional and local book fairs, including the 100th annual Poush Mela Fair in Shantiniketan, West Bengal, an event organized for people of different faiths to share their thoughts and ideals; the State Book Fair of Manipur which was organized by the State Central Library; and the first Shreekshetra Book Festival in Puri Town, Orissa, which was inaugurated by the Governor of the state, the Honorable Shri B. Satyanarayan Reddy.

Bahá'í Scholarship

"Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone.... In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him...."¹ These words of Bahá'u'lláh were included in a compilation of Bahá'í writings on scholarship prepared by the Research Department of

1. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), pp. 51-52.

the Bahá'í World Centre at the request of the Universal House of Justice. The covering letter dated 10 February 1995, which was sent with the compilation to National Spiritual Assemblies, stated:

The House of Justice calls upon the members of the community of the Greatest Name, young and old, men and women alike, to strive to develop and offer to humanity a new model of scholarly activities along the lines set out in this compilation, animated by the spirit of inquiry into the limitless meaning of the Divine Teachings. This scholarly endeavor should be characterized by the welcome it offers to all who wish to be involved in it, each in his or her own way, by mutual encouragement and cooperation among its participants, and by the respect accorded to distinguished accomplishment and outstanding achievement.

Efforts made to fulfill this mandate ranged from local community study classes to university level courses on the Bahá'í Faith. Some classes, conferences, permanent institutes, and Bahá'í schools were primarily aimed at helping Bahá'ís to deepen their understanding of the Bahá'í teachings and apply them to the issues of the day. Although many of these gatherings were open to interested members of the public, more formal attempts were also made to invite public participation in Bahá'í scholarship through symposia, seminars, courses at non-Bahá'í institutions, and publications. Bahá'ís also participated in academic events organized by others, increasingly because they were invited to give talks or present papers.

The Association for Bahá'í Studies in North America held several conferences during the year. "Anarchy into Order: Understanding Humanity's Role and Destiny" was the theme of the Association's 18th annual conference held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in August 1994. About 700 Bahá'ís and their friends spent three and a half days discussing the Bahá'í vision of a new global civilization, the gathering enhanced by the presence of Dr. David Ruhe, former member of the Universal House of Justice, six members of the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Americas, and several members of the Harvard University faculty.

The annual conference was divided into three sections: a day of special interest seminars, a day devoted to study sessions involving both lectures and courses, and a series of plenary meetings and panels addressing the world's major problems. Interspersed throughout were artistic presentations, including a choral concert, dramatic monologues and poetry readings, and dance performances. Dr. Ruhe delivered the Hasan Balyuzi Memorial Lecture in the Ames Courtroom of Harvard Law School, where John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X had been invited over the years to speak on the state of the world.

The annual conference of the Association for Bahá'í Studies for English-Speaking Europe was held at the London School of Economics and Political Science in October. Entitled "'Abdu'l-Bahá in London," the event included lectures on the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His talks while in London in 1912, and His divine philosophy. Workshops were conducted on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings on spirituality, on women, and on Christianity.

Among the conferences held by other Associations for Bahá'í Studies were two in Australia—one in July on "The Family: Our Hopes and Challenges" and one in October focused on the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*—and a national symposium in India entitled "Oneness of Mankind." At a conference organized in December in Switzerland by the Association for Bahá'í Studies for Francophone Europe, nine youth presented commentaries on the papers presented at the Association's annual meeting, thus providing the youth an opportunity to study intensely the topic of social and moral issues.

The Fourth and Fifth Scripture Studies Colloquia, both focusing on the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, took place in the Netherlands and the United States, respectively. The fourth colloquium, held at De Poort Conference Center in November, drew more than 70 participants from ten countries who heard presentations such as "The Terms Revelation, Interpretation and Elucidation in the Bahá'í Writings" and "The History of Writing and Transmission of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*." Nine research papers were presented at the fifth colloquium, held at the Bahá'í National Center in Wilmette, Illinois, in March 1995. The colloquia are sponsored

by the Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund to promote deeper and more systematic study of the holy writings, provide opportunities for interaction between various views and understandings of the Faith in an atmosphere of tolerance and loving unity, and to encourage those interested in scholarly studies to pursue this interest.

“A Celebration of the Centenary of the Bahá’í Faith in North America” was the theme of a Bahá’í history conference held in Wilmette, Illinois, in June 1994. Scholarly papers were presented on topics related to the Faith’s growth in North America, and four Bahá’í women shared their insights into different eras of the Faith’s development as part of an oral history panel.

University level study of the Bahá’í Faith took place in Korea as part of a comparative religion course at Chunnam University; in Azerbaijan as part of the History of Religions course at Baku North University; and in the United States, where a full-credit student-organized seminar was offered at Northwestern University and a summer credit course was offered at DePaul University. At Dhaka University in Bangladesh, Bahá’í law was approved as a subject of study in the law curriculum. The University Senate of the University of Fort Hare in South Africa approved inclusion of the Bahá’í Faith in the curriculum of the Faculty of Theology beginning in 1996.

Advanced research on the Bahá’í Faith continued at India’s University of Indore, home of one of two Bahá’í Chairs in the world. (The other is the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland in the United States.) One of four individuals pursuing doctorates in religious studies with a focus on the Bahá’í Faith completed his thesis and was awarded his degree.

In October 1994, URANIA, an organization in Austria that helps shape public opinion by providing courses and seminars, decided to hold a course on the Bahá’í Faith. The four-part course on the nature and history of the Bahá’í Faith was structured to include two lectures by Bahá’ís and two by a professor at the Faculty of Religious Studies at the University of Graz.

One-time presentations, such as lectures, symposia, or exhibits, were also offered at universities to familiarize academics with the teachings of the Bahá’í Faith. In Panama, an exhibition

entitled “Towards a New World Order” was displayed for two weeks at the Simon Bolivar Library of the University of Panama. About 35 professors from the university also attended a series of seminars on Bahá’í concepts of education, presented by a member of the Auxiliary Board. In southern Africa, monthly talks were presented at the University of Swaziland on topics such as “Does Religion Contradict Tradition?” and “The Need for Education Towards a Violence-Free Society.” The University of the Philippines was the site of a symposium organized by the university Bahá’í club entitled “World Religions: Sources of Moral Values for Peace and Development in Society.” When Professor Suheil Bushrui of the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland visited France in April 1995, he spoke at a conference in Paris on “The Spiritual Heritage of the Human Race, the Foundation of a World Civilization.”

The Bahá’í Faith was represented at the annual conference of the American Academy of Religion held in Chicago in November 1994. For four days almost 8,000 professors and graduate students of religious studies, clergy, and other researchers gathered to hear talks about religion, view exhibits by publishers, and attend receptions. The Bahá’í Studies Colloquy included four talks, and the Bahá’í Publishing Trust provided an exhibit.

Presentations on the Bahá’í Faith were made at the Pedagogical Institute in Barnaul, Russia, and at the university. The chairman of the philosophy department of the Pedagogical Institute then introduced the Bahá’í Faith into the examination program and suggested it as a topic of research. Also in Russia, Bahá’ís spoke at a scientific conference called “Religion and Culture” held at the Ural University in June.

Dr. Udo Schaefer, a Bahá’í scholar from Germany, was invited to make a presentation on “Bahá’u’lláhs Einheitsparadigma—Grundlage eines Ethos ohne falsche Vereinnahmung”² on 30 September 1994 at an international interfaith congress organized by the University of Erlangen/Nuremberg on The Project Global Ethic in Education. The gathering was initiated by a leading

2. The presentation was later translated into English as “Bahá’u’lláh’s Unity Paradigm—A Contribution to Interfaith Dialogue on a Global Ethic.”

member of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, Protestant theologian Professor Johannes Lähnemann, and eminent Catholic theologian Dr. Hans Küng. Some 300 people, including university professors, church leaders, and representatives of various faith communities, took part.

A Bahá'í paper on the harmony between science and religion was presented in Romania as part of panel discussion at a seminar sponsored by the Academy for the Study of World Religions. The September 1994 seminar, entitled "Interculturalism in the Study of World Religions," drew a large number of academics and representatives from Romanian cultural, diplomatic, and religious circles. It was held in collaboration with the World Conference on Religion and Peace, the UNESCO Center for Higher Learning, and the United Nations Information Center. A booklet composed of abstracts of the papers submitted for the seminar showed that another presenter, Professor Constantin Cucos of the University of Iași, who is not a Bahá'í, had written a paper entitled "Educational Dimensions of Religious Globalism" in which he analyzed principles of Bahá'í education and suggested them as the most valuable ones for the spiritualization and development of mankind.

Dr. Wilma Ellis, member of the Board of Counsellors for the Americas, was invited to deliver the baccalaureate address for the class of 1994 at Stanford University in the United States. Before 4,000 students and visitors, she called upon the graduating seniors to turn away from the "false values" of selfishness, separatism, exclusivism, and greed. She then urged them to "remember the great imperatives of our age" and to reject the hatreds, the pettiness, and the cowardice that divide. The address was enthusiastically received.

Intensive study of the Faith by Bahá'ís continued to take place in venues ranging from weekly classes in homes, to seasonal schools, to permanent institutes. In July 1994, the Green Acre Bahá'í School in Eliot, Maine, USA, celebrated a triple anniversary: the centenary of its founding, the grand reopening and dedication of the newly remodeled Sarah Farmer Inn, which was the school's original building, and the 100th anniversary of the raising of the world's first known "peace

flag." Nearly 800 Bahá'ís and their guests gathered to pay tribute to this institution which has provided a venue for exploration of the Bahá'í Faith to thousands of people over the decades.

In January 1995, the first ten-day residential session of Yerrinbool Bahá'í School's three-year Certificate Program in Bahá'í Studies took place in Australia; the Vivian Wesson Institute opened in Togo in November 1994 to provide courses for local believers; and a new Permanent Teaching Institute was established in New Delhi, India, in March 1995.³

Bahá'í Community Life

In the midst of the horrors which plagued Rwanda during 1994, ten Bahá'ís managed to gather at the Bahá'í National Center in Kigali on 20 October to pray together and read the sacred writings in commemoration of the Anniversary of the Birth of the Báb. As the fight for survival understandably consumed the attention of most of the nation, these souls gave priority to the spiritual nurturing which they knew would sustain them and which forms the heart of Bahá'í community life.

The aim of social transformation towards which Bahá'ís work is viewed as dependent on individual spiritual progress, a process which must be continually sustained through private worship and community support. The Nineteen Day Feast is the regular local gathering at which Bahá'ís pray and read the sacred writings together, discuss community development, and get to know each other; holy day commemorations constitute another vital element of Bahá'í devotional life. The pattern provided by these mainstays is then embellished in different ways by different communities as the talents, needs, and creative energies of the believers emerge.

3. The term "Teaching Institute" is used with reference to a variety of programs of varying length and complexity aimed at developing the human resources of communities through study of the Bahá'í teachings and through service. A "Permanent Teaching Institute" is an agency of the National Spiritual Assembly that provides an ongoing series of such courses and activities. Two of these agencies are the Ruhi Institute in Puerto Tejada, Colombia, and the Bahá'í Academy in Panchgani, India.

Seasonal schools, conferences, and study gatherings have become standard events in most national communities, providing opportunities for Bahá'ís to study the sacred writings intensely together, to share their artistic talents, and to consult in more depth than they can during briefer events. Such gatherings also allow Bahá'ís from diverse locations to meet and share perspectives and experiences. Examples of such gatherings held in 1994–95 include a spring school in Split, Croatia, which brought

Members of the El Encanto, Venezuela, Bahá'í community consult on their goals during a workshop given by members of the Auxiliary Board.



together Bahá'ís for study and presentation of public talks as soon as a main road reopened following fighting in the area; a winter school held in the United Nations-monitored zone between northern and southern Cyprus during which participants studied individual and collective transformation, the power of the Word of God, and the art of consultation; and the first Bahá'í Life Conference in the Bahamas at which performances of a choir were interspersed throughout the program of study.

The central importance of the Bahá'í sacred writings as the basis for all community life was beautifully demonstrated in Papua New Guinea when the first English translation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (Most Holy Book) was released. When the residents of the village of Medene were told of the imminent arrival of the book, they prepared a temporary meeting house and a program of prayers, readings and speeches of welcome. They constructed a dignified flower-decorated bower beside the river two kilometers from the village where they knew those carry-

ing the Aqdas over the mountain would need to place it while they rested. The footpath leading to the village was widened and decorated with palm fronds and fragrant flowers. Bahá'í youth composed songs in the local languages to mark the occasion.

An entourage of 50 immaculately-dressed Bahá'ís carried one copy of the Book over the mountain. One elderly woman bent with age insisted on witnessing the historic occasion and made the journey even though she knew it might be her last. When the procession finally arrived, the speeches reiterated the theme that now the village would become a true Bahá'í village functioning in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Similar scenes could be witnessed in other regions of Papua New Guinea. In Mt. Brown, Central Province, roads were cleared and decorated and special songs composed. More than 600 Bahá'ís gathered, some traveling four days on foot to be present. A special center was constructed to house a copy of the Aqdas. As additional copies were presented to chairmen of Local Spiritual Assemblies in the area, each kissed the book and placed it reverently over his or her head.

Significant anniversaries are cause for community celebration,



The Bahá'ís of Goodenough Island, Papua New Guinea, celebrate the arrival of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas by carrying it to the Bahá'í Center on a bed of flowers.

too. A gala banquet in Chicago in June 1994 marked the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Bahá'í Faith in North America. Chicago is where the first Americans to become Bahá'ís began to study the Faith in 1894 and where the name of



Children dance and sing at a holy day celebration in Vientiane, Laos, in February 1995.

Bahá'u'lláh was mentioned publicly for the first time in the Western hemisphere. The 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Bahá'í Faith in Australia was commemorated in April 1995 by a special service at the House of Worship and numerous local gatherings.

Race Unity

In the spring of 1994, just as the Republic of South Africa was in the process of holding its first multiracial elections after a long history of apartheid, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South Africa issued a statement called *Overcoming Racial Prejudice: South Africa's Most Challenging Issue*. In it, the Assembly shared its vision of the new South Africa, a vision of unity in diversity, and offered itself as an example of the unifying power of spiritual principles. The statement was presented to mayors, other government officials, newspaper editors, and the general public.

South Africa was just one of many regions of the world suffering from racial and ethnic conflict and struggling to find its way past this age-old stumbling block to progress. Bahá'ís found their efforts to share the essential Bahá'í principle of the oneness of mankind more welcome than ever.

A statement called "Conquer Racism" was prepared by the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland to provide a Bahá'í

perspective on an upcoming vote on an antiracism article of the penal code. The Swiss news agency and several newspapers printed the statement.

The Bahá'í community of Bermuda was encouraged by the public's reaction to the contributions made by the National Spiritual Assembly to legislative developments related to race unity and justice. When the government created a new Ministry of Human Affairs and Information to lead the war against institutional racism, the Ministry called for submissions to assist in the formation of a strategy. The National Spiritual Assembly, in collaboration with the Bahá'í International Community United Nations Office, developed a statement calling for the establishment of the Council for Unity and Racial Equality (CURE). The government adopted this recommendation, and a committee of the National Spiritual Assembly continued to work with the government and CURE.

Unity in Diversity Week in Canada, 6–12 November, was celebrated by communities all across the country. Among the events were a three-day display and musical celebration in the City Center Mall of East York, Ontario; a week of events featuring discussion on "Fostering Unity and Community" in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia; an exhibit and discussion at the civic center in St. Albert, Alberta; and visits to schools in Taché, Manitoba, to discuss how differences enrich our lives.

The Bahá'í community of the United States continued to pay particular attention to working toward a vision of racial unity, having been instructed by Shoghi Effendi as long ago as 1938 to view racial prejudice as the most vital and challenging issue it faces, one which requires "ceaseless exertions," "sacrifices," "care and vigilance," and "moral courage and fortitude." Efforts ranged from steps taken to help communities and individuals change ingrained habits of prejudice, to celebrations of Race Unity Day, to conferences for making plans of action.

"Calling All Colors: An Invitation to Raise the First Generation of Prejudice-Free Children" was the theme of the seventh annual Children's Peace Conference held in the winter of 1994 in Pasadena, California. The first "Calling All Colors" conference,

which was held in 1992 in South Carolina and was originated and planned by a nine-year-old Bahá'í girl named Anisa Kintz, has inspired similar gatherings in various locations. At the California event, more than 350 children and youth, a mixture of Bahá'ís and children of other religious backgrounds, participated in workshops on the theme while the 75 adults present consulted on "Creating a Prejudice-Free Home." Several school superintendents and principals observed the conference, and two requested the organizers to repeat the program in their schools.

The original program had inspired singer-songwriter Susan Lewis Wright to compose a song entitled "Calling All Colors," which she introduced during a conference of the same name held in Castle Rock, Colorado, in November 1994. After copies of her song were sent to the Denver mayor's office, Ms. Wright was invited to serve on the Martin Luther King Jr. Colorado Holiday Commission. Among the many race unity activities she was able to arrange, in cooperation with the commission, was a performance of the Diversity Children's Choir—composed of children from Cambodian, Mexican, African, Korean, Persian and European ancestry—before President Clinton and an audience of 40,000 for the area's largest commemoration of Martin Luther King Day.

Open-ended dramatic presentations which challenged audiences to find alternatives to conflict were among the methods used by New York City Bahá'ís and friends to help people learn new behaviors. The New York City Bahá'í Center was the venue for performances of the One People Conflict Resolution Theater Workshop, a project of the Symposium for the Healing of Racism which was formed by interfaith minister Laura Gabriel and a local Bahá'í, Jan Smith. The group of professional actors performed scenes of racially charged incidents that were stopped right before violence broke out; then the audience dispersed into discussion groups that spent an hour with trained facilitators analyzing the sources of the conflict and options for resolving it. When the best alternative solution was selected, the actors improvised the new final scene.

The initial performances of One People were very well received and the project shows promise of continuing. The Symposium for

the Healing of Racism received funding for the project from the New York City Community Assistance Unit's "Stop the Violence" fund.

Bahá'ís also played a leading role organizing a seminar at the Springfield (Massachusetts) Technical Community College entitled "Unity '94: A Dialogue on Racism." Keynote addresses by two Bahá'ís, Dr. Paul Herron of the University of Tennessee Medical School and Dr. John Woodall, a psychiatrist at Harvard University, were followed by a panel discussion and smaller workshops for the 600 people attending.

Invitations for Bahá'ís to assist with local efforts to improve race relations were extended in several cities. The mayor of Edwardsville, Illinois, asked the Bahá'ís to spearhead a race unity campaign, leading sensitivity workshops for city employees, speaking at the Rotary Club, the high school, and before other groups, and serving on the human relations panel at City Hall. In Rapid City, South Dakota, city officials invited the Local Spiritual Assembly to take a leadership role making the Central State Fair a showcase of diversity.

The 1994 Racial Justice Award for groups/agencies was bestowed upon the Bahá'í community of Decatur, Illinois, by the Decatur YWCA in November. The Bahá'í community was nominated for "upholding the standard of the fundamental unity of the human race and promoting this principle in the Decatur area through a variety of activities over a span of some 30 years." Among the activities cited were Race Unity Day picnics, a workshop on racism, a race unity forum, the Bahá'í Youth Workshop, and a wealth of information campaigns.

Race Unity Day commemorations began in 1957 (originally called Race Amity Day) when the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States designated the second Sunday in June for this purpose. In 1994 there were picnics, parades, arts festivals, speeches, proclamations, and exhibits all asserting the oneness of humanity while celebrating its diversity. Among the highlights were an exhibit in San Diego, California, which addressed the issue of race unity, took participants through the history of the Bahá'í Faith, and presented prospects for raising a prejudice-free generation; preparation for a series of musical events and activities



Bahá'is in Dallas, Texas, display their race unity banner during a parade.

Kingsley and Suzanne Swan sing at the "Vanguard of the Dawning" conference honoring African Americans. The gathering was held in Chicago, November 1994.



Jacksonville (Florida) Bahá'is march in the Kuumba Festival Parade, May 1994.



for children in Lafayette, Indiana, which led to the formation of a new Race Unity Coalition to plan future events; a workshop on cultural diversity for the officials of Lake County, Illinois; presentation of Race Unity Day awards at Columbia University's Earl Hall in New York City; and a picnic in Lee County, Virginia, which drew 400 people of diverse backgrounds.

The celebration of Race Unity Day and a multicultural arts festival sponsored by the Bahá'is of Walla Walla, Washington, attracted 3,500 people—one-tenth of the city's residents. Preparations were made in cooperation with a number of other religious and community organizations, whose representatives formed the Walla Walla Race Unity Committee, and the event itself was supported by local businesses and the mayor. The community created a day full of music and cultural dances by Hispanic, American Indian, Irish, German, Middle Eastern, and African American performers, story-telling, hands-on projects for the children, and international board games and food booths.

About 600 Bahá'is—African American, American Indian, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Persian—from all over the United States and from as far away as South Africa came together in November 1994 for "Vanguard of the Dawning," a national Bahá'í conference focusing on the African American community. The deeply spiritual gathering, which was filled with poetry, music, drama, and dance, provided participants an opportunity to share their experiences and emotions, to affirm and celebrate the proud destiny of African Americans, and to challenge each other to reach higher levels of achievement and unity. "As each person's uniquely God-given contribution was laid before us, there came in rippling waves love, acceptance, self-esteem, respect, comfort, beauty, wonderment, and yes, astonishment," the conference task force reported.

On 11 May 1994, the National Spiritual Assembly presented testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in support of United States ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Convention establishes an international legal standard that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity or

national origin in all aspects of public life including the political, economic, social, and cultural arenas.

Advancement of Women

“And among the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh is the equality of women and men. The world of humanity has two wings—one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible. Not until the world of women becomes equal to the world of men in the acquisition of virtues and perfections, can success and prosperity be attained as they ought to be.”⁴

During 1994–95, the Bahá’í community worked toward the goal of full equality by focusing its efforts on three main areas: preparing for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in September 1995; sharing Bahá’í teachings on the status of women with a range of like-minded women’s organizations and developing working relations with them; and encouraging Bahá’í women to fulfill their potential through better understanding their true spiritual station.⁵

Representatives of the Bahá’í International Community became involved in preparations for Beijing from the moment the conference was announced, having also participated extensively in the previous three world conferences on women. The director of the Bahá’í International Community’s Office for the Advancement of Women, Mary Power, served as a member of the global NGO Facilitating Committee organizing the NGO Forum on Women ’95, to be held in conjunction with the Beijing conference. During the current period under review, Bahá’í delegations attended all five Regional United Nations Preparatory Conferences and the four remaining Regional NGO Forums leading to Beijing.

4. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá’í World Centre, 1978), p. 302.

5. For an historical overview of Bahá’í efforts to promote the advancement of women, see “Towards the Goal of Full Partnership: One Hundred and Fifty Years of the Advancement of Women,” *The Bahá’í World 1993–94*, pp. 237–275.

Delegations ranging from one to as many as ten Bahá’ís represented the community at the intergovernmental preparatory conferences held in Jakarta, Indonesia (June 1994); Mar del Plata, Argentina (September); Vienna, Austria (October); Amman, Jordan (November); and Dakar, Senegal (November). The delegations were diverse according to age, ethnic background, and profession, and were distinctive for the participation of men, demonstrating Bahá’í commitment to true partnership in the quest for equality.⁶

In addition, a Bahá’í from Nigeria was appointed by that country’s National Council of Women’s Societies to lead a team of women to the regional conference for Africa, held in Senegal. The woman appointed for this task, Florence Assam, is the president of the Bahá’í Office for the Advancement of Women in Nigeria.

On the national level, the Bahá’í community of Côte d’Ivoire was the only religious community to be a member of that country’s Beijing ’95 National Preparatory Committee. Members worked to prepare materials on the role of women in the peace process. In Finland, the Bahá’í community contributed extensively to the Nordic Forum, a regional conference arranged in August 1994 at the initiative of the Nordic Council of Ministers to prepare for Beijing. The Bahá’í community staffed an information booth, organized an art exhibition called “The Female Voice: Bahá’í Women in Art,” and provided lectures and seminars on topics such as women’s contributions to the advancement of civilization and unlocking the potential of women.

In the United States, Bahá’ís participated in ten regional conferences sponsored by the government to enable individuals and NGOs to contribute to the national report being prepared for the Beijing conference. Bahá’í participation focused on partnership between men and women, the role of women in peace, and ratification by the United States of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

6. For more detailed information on Bahá’í participation in the preparatory conferences and the Regional NGO Forums held in conjunction with them, see the article on Bahá’í International Community activities, pp. 146–147.

The Bahá'í Office for the Advancement of Women in India made efforts to discuss the status of women and to share Bahá'í principles with NGOs and government agencies preparing India's report for Beijing. Also in Asia, the Singapore Bahá'í Women's Council (SBWC) was one of five organizations represented on the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations' NGO Committee for the Fourth World Conference on Women. In April 1994, this Committee organized a workshop on "Women, Economics, and Sustainable Development" at which booklets containing write-ups on the SBWC were given to the 200 participants.

In addition to preparing for the World Conference on Women, Bahá'ís continued to share ideas and work together with organizations having similar concerns. As they became more recognized for this work, they were increasingly invited to participate and offer their views.

Invitations to speak at gatherings related to women's issues came from, among others, the Council of Europe, which included a lecture by a Bahá'í on "Women as Educators for Peace" in its program for a seminar entitled "The Role of Women in Politics and Society" held in Budapest, Hungary, in November 1994; a leading women's organization in Sri Lanka which sponsored the Sri Lanka Women's Conference on the theme "Education, Empowerment, and Environment"; and a group of 40 prominent women in Cheongju City, Korea, who requested an address by the visiting director of the Bahá'í International Community's Office for the Advancement



Children in Macau make their handprints on a banner that will be sent to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

of Women, an event which was covered by the press.

The Bahá'í Women's Committee of Hong Kong was invited by the working group of the Hong Kong Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum to help plan a "Vision for the 21st Century Conference" for February 1995. Representatives from 40 women's groups attended, and speakers addressed topics such as women's rights and the law, violence against women, and health and welfare. A member of the Bahá'í Auxiliary Board, May Chan Borumand, spoke on "Hong Kong's Environmental Crisis—What Can Women Do?"

A representative of the Bahá'í Committee for the Advancement of Women of the Republic of Ireland and a Bahá'í who serves as a member of the executive committee of the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform participated in discussions at a conference called "Women Shaping the Future: Political, Economic, and Social Development in the Island of Ireland." The gathering was put together by the Council for the Status of Women, the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, United States Ambassador Jean Kennedy-Smith, and the Head of the European Commission office in Dublin to formulate a women's perspective on issues relating to the future in light of moves toward peace.

International Women's Day, 8 March 1995, was celebrated in Guyana with two weeks of activities jointly planned by sixteen organizations, one of which was the National Spiritual Assembly. Bahá'ís were asked to chair the interfaith service which launched the program of events, to make a presentation on the



Members of the Center for the Development of Women, in Bangui, Central African Republic, demonstrate their newly-acquired sewing skills during a parade in 1994.

plight of Amerindian women on a radio program entitled *Viewpoint*, and to explain Bahá'í principles related to women on a radio program called *Let's Gaff*. In Saint Lucia, Bahá'í quotations on the equality of women and men were read at the official observance of International Women's Day. The Bahá'ís were invited to present a short message in their capacity as a member organization of the National Council of Women. The event was attended by the Governor-General, the Prime Minister, most of the government ministers, and members of the diplomatic corps.

When the Association for Women's Interests, Women's Work, and Equal Constitutional Rights in the Netherlands hosted a centenary celebration in June 1994, a Bahá'í representative helped present a workshop conveying Bahá'í teachings to an international audience. The celebration began with a reception in The Hague attended by Queen Beatrix. On behalf of the Bahá'í International Community, a decorated card with text from *The Promise of World Peace* related to women was presented to the chairperson.

After the Bahá'í community of Guinea-Bissau participated in a workshop at which the Faith's views on the role of women and their participation in social and economic development were presented, the country's Minister of Women's and Social Affairs invited representatives of the National Spiritual Assembly to meet with her. Bahá'í principles related to women in society, education, and development were among the topics discussed during the 45-minute interview.

"Universal Values for the Advancement of Women and the Bahá'í Faith" was the title of a paper presented at an international conference on women, the environment, and development held in New Delhi, India. The Center for Environmental and Management Studies organized the event. Following the Bahá'í presentation, a number of representatives of NGOs approached the Bahá'ís to discuss starting collaborative projects.

In Zaire, a delegation of Bahá'ís contributed a photographic exhibit of Bahá'ís from around the world and a display of Bahá'í literature to a women's gathering held at the People's Palace in Kinshasa. The gathering, held in August 1994, was sponsored by

In Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India, the State Minister for Health and Family Welfare, the Honorable Dr. Kamala Das, holds devotional audio cassettes at a Bahá'í Women's Development Institute held in December 1994.



an organization called African Horizons, and attracted more than 1,500 visitors.

A member of the Bahá'í community of Hawaii, Florence Kelly, attended the 19th International Conference of Pan Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's Association in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, at the end of August 1994. Representatives of the nineteen member countries around the Pacific Basin and India were all present.

In the spring of 1995, the National Bahá'í Women's Committee of the United Kingdom was approved as an associate member of the Women's National Commission. The membership in this organization is reassessed only every five years. In Nigeria, the National Council of Women's Societies, Delta State, granted a certificate of affiliation to the Bahá'í Office for the Advancement of Women.

Presentations and gatherings organized by Bahá'í communities for the public included a reception hosted by l'Association bahá'íe de Femmes in France in honor of the Triennial Conference of the International Council of Women in June; a public meeting organized by Bahá'ís in Islamabad, Pakistan, with talks on the life of ʾĀhírah, who has been called the first woman suffrage martyr; a reception for about 45 people of prominence from various women's organizations sponsored by the Local Spiritual Assembly of Londonderry, Northern Ireland, in honor of the visiting President of the All-India Women's Conference; and a talk called "Men's Rights, Women's Rights, Who is Right?"

sponsored by Bahá'ís at the University of Swaziland.

A Bahá'í living in Albania received support from the director of the United Nations Development Program to put together the first international women's conference to be held in Tirana. More than 200 women from fourteen cities of Albania and ten other countries gathered in the national museum in October 1994 to share information and discussion about the status of women.

Bahá'ís recognize that although the reality of equality was fully established by Bahá'u'lláh, individuals and communities must exert great effort to bring human understanding and practice into accord with this spiritual truth. Thus Bahá'í communities see themselves on the path to equality, possessing the necessary maps and an ever-evolving vision of the goal but always aware that they have far to go. While efforts must be made to share the vision with as many people as possible, equal attention must be given to developing the reality of equality among those who have accepted Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

Much of this work involves encouraging women to understand their true station and manifest their capacities, as the lack of education and opportunity caused by discrimination has hampered the full development of half of the human race. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asserts that in addition to the critical role to be played by women in establishing peace and in educating future generations, the advancement of women is necessary for bringing about the progress of humanity in general. "As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs."⁷

A number of conferences and seminars were organized during



Tribal women from Dangs, India, attend a class at the Gujarat Bahá'í Winter School in Vansda, India, January 1995.

1994–95, some to provide women with opportunities to explore the issues and others to create forums for women and men to examine their common responsibility for equality.

The Task Force on Women appointed by the Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe arranged a series of seminars for women to explore the concept of service in the Bahá'í Faith and how it can unlock the potential of women. These seminars on service followed earlier gatherings on the topics of encouragement and transformation. The seminar held at De Poort, Netherlands, in January 1995 drew 37 women from fifteen countries. In February a similar seminar brought 22 women from Germany, Austria, Albania, France, Greece, and Luxembourg to Karlsruhe, Germany. In an atmosphere of love and beauty, the women prayed together, consulted and made individual plans of action, studied Bahá'í teachings on the capacities of women, and formed networks of support.

Similar gatherings for women included a three-day institute in Bakong, Malaysia, which was particularly successful in creating an awareness among the 74 women present of the importance of eradicating illiteracy; a conference in Kwaloai, Solomon Islands, which attracted 250 Bahá'ís; the final institute in a one-year series for women in Taiwan; weekend institutes to empower women in Zambia and in South Africa; a seminar in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Russia; and a national women's annual convention in Nigeria.

Opportunities were also created for men and women to examine together the issues related to equality. A wide range of viewpoints was expressed and a dynamic group of artists, performers, and musicians displayed their talents during the Conference on Women in Bahá'í Perspective held at the United States Bahá'í National Center. The January 1995 event was arranged to provide an intimate, unified setting for new and creative thinking about the subject.

During the same month, Bahá'ís on the other side of the world held a national conference with the theme "Partnership of Men and Women: A New Reality." The Office for the Advancement

7. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911–12*, 11th ed. (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972), p. 133.

of Women in India organized the conference in Lucknow to raise awareness of the importance of following the spiritual principles of the Bahá'í Faith which pertain to equality and to determine action plans that would cause girls and women to advance. Participants discussed the importance of the education of girls, incorporating women into all Bahá'í activities, consultation, and the role of youth in establishing equality. Women and men in New Zealand also consulted together about the advancement of women at a conference held in February 1995 in Christchurch.

Environment

When world leaders gathered in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, or "the Earth Summit"), they were unable to reach agreement on a legally binding Convention on preservation of the world's forests, so they settled for adopting a nonbinding set of Forest Principles. In 1994, the Bahá'í International Community helped to bring together representatives from government, business, environmental, and religious sectors to lay the groundwork for moving to adoption of a Convention. This was just one of the actions taken by Bahá'ís during the period under review to continue steadily advancing the cause of environmental protection.

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm were the principal speakers at the World Forestry Charter Gathering held 28 July 1994 at the Palace of St. James, London. More than 200 distinguished guests from over 30 countries attended, and messages of support and encouragement were sent from seventeen governments. "As with so many environmental challenges we face, there are no borders when it comes to the protection and sustainable management of the earth's forests," wrote United States President Bill Clinton, echoing the theme of the gathering. As organizer Guilda Walker stated, "We were especially hoping to address the issue of forestry in a global context, to further the idea that the world's forests must be considered the common heritage of all humanity if they are to be

effectively preserved and sustainably managed."

The World Forestry Charter Gatherings were first convened in 1945 by noted ecologist and Bahá'í Richard St. Barbe Baker and were revived by the Bahá'í International Community in 1989, acting in collaboration with Dr. Baker's literary executor and several environmental organizations. This year's event was supported by the International Tree Foundation, the World Wide Fund for Nature, and the United Nations Environment Program.⁸

The Earth Summit in Rio was also the occasion for public dedication of a peace monument commissioned by the Bahá'í International Community, with particular involvement of Brazilian Bahá'ís. On the final day of the Summit, soil from 40 nations was deposited in the hourglass-shaped monument as a symbol that all humanity shares one planet and that time is running out. On World Environment Day in 1993, soil from 15 additional nations was added, and on 5 June 1994, samples were deposited from Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Kiribati, Liberia, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Suriname, and Uganda. "It is our intention to add soil from the nations of the world each year on World Environment Day until all nations are represented," said Lawrence Arturo, Director of the Bahá'í International Community Office of the Environment.

During the days preceding the 1994 ceremony, the Bahá'ís of Brazil also took part in Rio de Janeiro's celebrations of "Environment Week." The Bahá'í community played a key role in organizing a Citizens' Forum on the issues and participated in a conference for government and NGO representatives on improving the quality of life in modern cities.

World Environment Day was also commemorated by Bahá'ís in other parts of the globe. The Pakistan National Center and the Interfaith Society for Environment Education (an NGO based in Hyderabad) invited a Bahá'í representative to speak and to distribute copies of the statement "The Environment—A Bahá'í View." Many local and national newspapers published full reports of the event. The Bahá'ís of Mbale, Uganda, were invited to lead a march on World Environment Day, and their efforts to

8. See also pp. 142–143.

protect the environment were singled out during a speech by the deputy central government representative. In Zaire, the Bahá'í Regional Committee for Social and Economic Development collaborated with other NGOs to plan two conferences to educate youth about the state of the environment.

Bahá'ís shared their views on the relationship between environmental protection, global cooperation, and spiritual principles with a variety of audiences. "The Social Roots of the Global Ecological Crisis," "Values as the Driving Force for Achieving Sustainable Development," and "New Approaches to Integrating Ecological, Economic, and Spiritual Factors in Society" were the

A government official in Uganda plants a tree at the Gulu Bahá'í Teaching Institute on the occasion of World Environment Day, 5 June 1994.



names of the presentations made by Arthur Lyon Dahl at a seminar organized by the Institute of Spiritual Foundations for World Civilization in Kiev, Ukraine. In Italy, a Bahá'í declaration on nature and preservation of the earth's resources was presented to a large group of scientists attending the Venice International Forum for a World Government for the Environment. In Costa Rica, Bahá'ís created an exhibit and were represented at the plenary sessions of the International Society for Ecological Economics' third annual conference, "Down to Earth: Practical Applications of Ecological Economics." The gathering was attended by more than 1,300 academics, students, and representatives of NGOs.

Bahá'ís in Peru contributed an exposition on natural resources to the first Ecology Festival sponsored by the Institute of Ecology in September 1994. In Japan, after a Bahá'í offered a workshop

on environmental problems transcending borders, a 90-minute video of the presentation was aired seven times on cable television. Bahá'í interest in environmental protection was recognized in New Zealand, where the Ministry for the Environment asked the Bahá'í community to comment on a discussion document entitled "Exploring the Options for Reducing Net Emissions of Carbon Dioxide." The Bahá'í Office of External Affairs submitted a report which focused on the need for international cooperation and global unity to adequately address the carbon dioxide emission problem, the need to recognize humanity's role as guardian of the well-being of the planet and future generations, and the fundamental need for changes in value systems as a prerequisite for a long-term solution.

A representative of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, Peter Adriance, was among the 200 people from NGOs on five continents who attended "Two Years After UNCED: Exploring Partnerships for Sustainable Development" in Iowa in July. The conference focused on cooperative efforts by business, government and NGOs to progress toward sustainable development following the 1992 Earth Summit. As part of the conference, the National Spiritual Assembly submitted a paper entitled *Unity and Consultation: Foundations for Sustainable Development*, and Mr. Adriance moderated a workshop on consultation and cooperation.

A number of national communities focused on the importance of educating children to love and protect the planet. The third Ecological Camp sponsored by the Bahá'í community of Colombia was held in January 1995 on a farm in Cachipay. The children attending studied the beauty of diversity and made posters for a children's art exhibition on the environment held annually in Taiwan. The 1994 exhibit featured the best 220 drawings of 2,250 entries from 38 countries on the theme "Our Fragile Environment." It was seen by more than 10,000 people.

In July 1994, a mini-Chikyukan ("Earth House") opened on the island of Shodoshima, Japan, to teach people about nature. The upper elementary Bahá'í children's class of Takamatsu prepared a program for the children attending the opening festival, and posters about the environment were created for

display in the Chikyukan. The Science Center in Singapore, which is visited by school groups, was the site of a display of Bahá'í environmental materials and a slide show prepared for Earth Day in April 1994. Copies of various environment-related statements were donated to the Center's library.

In early April 1995, the first of a two-session Summit on Religions and Conservation was held in Atami, Japan, to be followed by the second meeting in Windsor, England, in May. The Summit was sponsored by MOA International, the Pilkington Foundation and the World Wide Fund for Nature. The Bahá'í Faith was one of nine religions to be represented, each offering a written statement on its theological teachings regarding conservation and sustainable development, a review of past activities, and a prospectus of future initiatives. Kimiko Schwerin, Counsellor member of the Bahá'í International Teaching Centre, made the Bahá'í presentation in Japan. (Details on the session in the United Kingdom will be included in *The Bahá'í World 1995-96*.)

Health Care

The period 1994-95 saw the formation of the Bahá'í Health Association for Central and Eastern Europe and a European Bahá'í Dental Association, and the first meeting of the Association of Bahá'í Doctors in India. These new organizations joined others, such as Health for Humanity, which are striving to address health care needs in a spirit of service and to provide arenas for consultation on long-term solutions to the health care crisis.

The new European associations were established during the second European Bahá'í Health Conference held in De Poort, Netherlands, in October 1994. Representatives of 25 countries gathered to hear lectures, participate in workshops, and view demonstrations of health projects that addressed the spiritual dimension of health care work. The first meeting of the Association of Bahá'í Doctors and Health Professionals in India took place in January 1995.

Free or low-cost medical services were provided by Bahá'í volunteers around the world. For example, three representatives of Health for Humanity brought the latest equipment and

techniques in cataract surgery to Dominica in March 1995 and spent one week performing surgery, seeing patients, and giving lectures to students of the Ross University School of Medicine and staff at the island's major hospital.

Eight British medical specialists representing the Bahá'í Health Agency UK travelled to Bucharest, Romania, in September 1994 to distribute medical aid and meet with colleagues to discuss plans for future distribution of aid, exchange visits for medical personnel, and twinning of hospitals. In Guyana, a member of the Bahá'í Health Partnership Program, Dr. Jamshid Aidun, received the Rotary Club's Paul Harris Fellow Award for his work in the Rupununi region.

More than 700 men, women, and children in the region of Korçë, Albania, received free dental care from visiting Bahá'í dentists in April 1995. The project was proposed by the European Association of Bahá'í Promoters of Oro-facial Health to give free dental treatment to a rural population with no local dentist and to analyze the dental needs of the residents and propose a more continuous project. Courses were also given in village schools about prevention of dental problems. The project was authorized by the Ministry of Health and the village mayors.

In India, two day-long free medical camps at Ussgao, organized by the State Bahá'í Council of Goa, and a one-day camp in the village of Muhana organized by the Bahá'í community of Jaipur were among the services rendered. In Malaysia, the Bahá'í community of Muar worked with the Lions Club of Tangkak to



Dr. Ardishir Vahidi poses with the Gypsy children in Chirileu, Romania, he visited to teach health and hygiene techniques.

A mother holds her child while a staff member at the mobile health clinic in the region of Menu, Kenya, gives an inoculation.



sponsor a blood donation campaign and to offer free eye examinations. A similar service was offered the following month in Serendah, Hulu Selangor.

Education

“Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess.... Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value.... Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.”⁹ Bahá’ís continued this year to act upon this truth by devoting particular attention to the need for moral education and by establishing and operating schools offering full academic programs.

Humanity’s crying need for workable concepts and practices in the area of moral education was responded to in a variety of ways by Bahá’ís. Eschewing the idea that one “model” of moral education currently exists but still believing in the need for theory to be informed by practice, Bahá’í communities embarked on journeys of action and reflection. They offered courses to meet the immediate requirements of children, and they participated in ongoing discussions on the subject to continually refine their understanding of this evolving field.

Moral education classes are an integral part of the curriculum at the Bahá’í-run Rabbani School in India, and students learn to

9. Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, 2d ed. (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1976), pp. 259–260.

conduct such classes in nearby villages. Likewise, students at the New Era Development Institute (NEDI) in Panchgani, India, learn these skills, and in October they provided lessons related to virtues for more than 1,000 children. NEDI also offered a teacher training program for approximately 70 villagers interested in starting ongoing classes. Moral education seminars are offered to local schools by the Local Spiritual Assembly of Lucknow, which this year arranged a three-day course for 150 teachers of the City Montessori School.

Seventy high school teachers from the western region of Paraguay participated in a course on moral education given by two Bahá’ís from Fernando de la Mora after they were invited to do so by the Ministry of Education and Religion. The workshops were so successful that the Bahá’ís were requested to conduct two more courses for

75 additional teachers. In Brazil, the directors of ten schools in the municipality of Socorro created a “Vision of Socorro for the Year 2000” during a course on moral education offered by a Bahá’í. Martha Jalali was invited by the Nucleus of Integration and Development of the



Bahá’í children’s classes in Plaplaya, a Garifuna village in Honduras.

Federal University of Sergipe to give the course, and she later spoke at a gathering of 600 youth organized by the course participants to discuss the role of youth in realizing the “Vision.”

Bahá’ís from Brazil offered seminars on moral education at a university and other venues in Arkhangelsk, Russia. Also in Russia, Shamil Fattakhov, a Bahá’í journalist, developed a television program called “Zi-Po-Po” which explores moral issues in a format suited for youth. Each episode centers around a theme—such as backbiting, theft, alcohol abuse—which is illustrated by a short drama. Then the youth in the audience are engaged in consultation about the principles involved in the

dilemma portrayed. Russian Bahá'ís Alexandra Lopatina and Maria Srebtsova wrote and published a book on the spiritual education of children which is proving quite popular.

High school students in Puno, Peru, completed a four-month-long moral leadership class in December 1994 offered by the staff of Radio Bahá'í in Lake Titicaca. The course will be taught again. In Angola, the National Spiritual Assembly was invited to be a member of the National Institute of Religious Affairs Council to coordinate the activities of the country's religious groups. The first meeting concentrated on how the organizations can "create a new race of men" given that children received virtually no moral education during 20 years of civil war.

Bahá'ís tried to advance the conversation about moral education in a variety of ways. In Brazil, "Moral and Ethical Leadership: A New Framework" was the theme of an October 1994 seminar cosponsored by the Bahá'í community of Salvador and the University of the State of Bahia. The same month Regional Symposia on Moral and Ethical Leadership took place at Londrina State University and in Manaus, the latter with the cooperation



The Ootan Marawa Bahá'í School opens in Kiribati in April 1995.

of several government and non-governmental organizations and the participation of over 250 people representing 61 groups.

In July 1994, Dr. Stephen Vickers presented a Bahá'í perspective on spiritual and moral education to the Roehampton Conference on Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child, which was held in the United Kingdom. Addressing the distinction between spiritual and moral education, he said, "Bahá'u'lláh claims that the human being has twin roles to play, distinct but of equal value. One is to know and to



Students and their teacher at the Lomshiyo preschool in Swaziland.

A new dormitory at the New Era High School in Panchgani, Maharashtra, India, was opened by the National Spiritual Assembly on 16 January 1995.



worship God.... The second role laid upon human beings is to carry forth an ever-advancing civilization, and corresponds to the development of moral qualities."

A symposium on the psychology of morality was conducted by Dr. Iraj Ayman and several colleagues at the International Congress of Applied Psychology held in Madrid. Participants from Japan, Mexico, Hawaii, India, China, the Philippines, and various countries of Europe expressed interest in pursuing further joint studies in moral psychology and education.

The National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador translated into Spanish the booklet *Exploring a Framework for Moral Education* and distributed it to prominent people throughout the country, including the deputies of the National Congress, district superintendents and supervisors of education, school principals, and teachers. In the East Leeward Islands, a booklet called *A New Framework for Moral Education*, the documented proceedings of a national symposium held in Albania in 1993, was sent to the Minister of Education for the government of Antigua and Barbuda.

Schools from the preschool to the university level are operated by Bahá'ís according to Bahá'í principles but open to all. Universidad Núr in Bolivia, for example, offers a variety of academic programs to facilitate community development. One of its many projects under way this year was a distance education effort to train 500 rural school teachers as agents for community development; the University published six textbooks on themes such as moral leadership, community participation, and training of adults to use in this program.

Other milestones this year in the area of education include the opening in September 1994 in Stratford, Ontario, Canada,



Participants in a literacy project training course, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

of the Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute, a secondary school which emphasizes the fine and performing arts, moral leadership, and studies in world order issues; the inauguration in January 1995 of Universidad Técnica Privada de Santa Cruz (the Private Technical University of Santa Cruz), Bolivia, which has

Bahá'í teachings registered in its constitution; and the official opening of the Ootan Marawa Bahá'í School in Na'a, North Tarawa, Kiribati in April 1995.

In the area of preschool education, two new schools were approved by the Minister of Education in Nicaragua, three Bahá'í preschools in Colombia graduated their first classes, and a book entitled *Pre-Primary Schools: A Bahá'í Teacher's Guide*, published by the Central and East African Bahá'í Regional Development Committee, was received enthusiastically by educators throughout Africa and Asia.

The Bahá'ís of Chita, Russia, were asked to provide teachers and a program for a children's summer camp held in 1994. They prepared activities, games, and workshops for 500 children on the topics of world religions, physical and spiritual health,

human relationships, and the environment, as well as teaching some dance, music, theater, crafts, and puppetry. Another camp was organized by Bahá'ís for children in Chiayi, Taiwan. The program included a variety of indoor and outdoor activities and emphasized the importance of developing virtues, the elimination of prejudices, and the unity of humanity.

Other Areas of Involvement

In addition to focusing their energies on promoting race unity, the advancement of women, environmental protection, health care, and education, Bahá'ís involved themselves in addressing other issues facing local communities, nations, and the world through participating in and sponsoring exchanges of ideas.

A delegation from the National Spiritual Assembly of Ethiopia was received by the Constitution Drafting Commission in May 1994 and offered a statement on principles that would benefit the nation. Similarly, when a Draft Constitution was being debated in Uganda, the National Spiritual Assembly of that country submitted a statement to the Uganda Constitutional Commission.

When the federal government of Canada set up a Special Joint Parliamentary Committee to Review Canadian Foreign Policy, officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade encouraged the Bahá'í community to present its views. In June 1994, a three-member delegation representing the National Spiritual Assembly met with the committee and presented an oral version of the written statement *A Bahá'í Perspective on the Future of Canadian Foreign Policy*.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Republic of Ireland was invited to submit its views on the future of Irish foreign policy when the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced that his department would develop a White Paper on the topic. The Bahá'ís' contribution was forwarded to the Department of Foreign Affairs in September 1994, and in January two Bahá'ís joined over 200 ministers of state, department heads, religious representatives, foreign ambassadors and media representatives for a conference on the White Paper.

A government study in Ecuador on "Free Education for Ecuadorian Families" prompted the Bahá'í community to contact

75 government officials and brief them on the Bahá'í viewpoint on religious education in the schools.

In November, the Bahá'í community of the United Kingdom was invited by the One World Trust to assist with a meeting to reestablish the Parliamentary Group for World Government. The meeting took place in the Moses Room of the House of Lords under the chairmanship of Lord Archer of Sandwell.

The European Bahá'í Business Forum (EBBF) responded to the growing need for exploration of the issues involved in raising the ethical standards practiced in business. In May 1994, the EBBF supervised a three-day seminar on integrating business ethics into the curriculum of the College of Management, Trade, Export, and Marketing in Sofia, Bulgaria, after being invited to do so by the dean of the college. In June a representative of EBBF spoke in Romania on the topic of business and ethics at the Center for Business Excellence, a consulting and training center, and at the University Polytechnic Center. The annual meeting of the EBBF, on the theme "Corporate Moralization in Europe," brought together 55 people from 20 countries in September. In 1995 the EBBF published two monographs: *Ethics After Socialism—Now or Ever?* and *Ethics and Entrepreneurship—An Oxymoron? The Transition to a Free Market Economy in Eastern Europe*.

Business ethics were also addressed by a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in the Americas when he spoke at two professional institutes in Peru. Eloy Anello gave talks on business leadership at the Peruvian Institute of Business Administration and at the Higher Learning Center.

A world press exhibition to mark International Day of Peace in El Salvador was one of many events sponsored by Bahá'í communities to promote peace. A 500-kilometer relay run from Hiroshima to Nagasaki, Japan, called "Peace, Pass It On!" was organized in August; the Bahá'í community of Edenvale, South Africa, hosted a National Peace Day celebration which included the presentation of prizes for a "peace arts" competition; and the Bahá'ís of San José, Costa Rica, continued to produce a weekly radio program on peace-making, with the support of the UN.

In July 1994, the World Center for Peace, Freedom and Human

Rights was inaugurated in Verdun, France, the site of one of the bloodiest battles of World War I. Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum was among the first 50 international religious, cultural, and political figures to cosponsor the creation of the Center, which will house a peace museum, a center for cultural and scientific research, a documents archives, and an international conference site.

All over the world, Bahá'í communities tried to stimulate conversation about the vital issues facing society and raise these conversations to the level of principle. The Bahá'í Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was the site of a Seminar on Global Change in July which included meetings on development, the status of women, sustainable agriculture, and international peace. Bahá'ís provided a book exhibit and four speakers to the Polish Congress on Universalism held at Warsaw University in September. An international conference on the topic "Transition to a Global Society" was held at the Scientific and Technical Research Authority of Turkey in Ankara in November. The Bahá'ís of Baguio City, Philippines, organized talks on AIDS awareness, crime prevention, ecology, and consultation at local high schools. The Bahá'ís of Auckland, New Zealand, hosted ongoing forums on important issues of the day.

The Bahá'í community of Brazil was extensively involved in the second Educational Congress for the Integration of Latin America (II CEPIAL), an effort aimed at "fostering the formation of new mechanisms to promote relations between regions and countries, seeking to initiate exchange, promotion, study,



A symposium on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, offered by the State Bahá'í Council of Orissa, India.

research, and human resource formation.” Approximately 7,000 people from business, media, universities, and human rights organizations attended the six-day event. Bahá’í contributions included speakers, panelists, art and book exhibits, official note-takers, and planning resources.

Also in Brazil, Bahá’í statements were presented at the International Congress of Economists, held in São Paulo in July 1994; a Conference on Food Security which gathered 2,000 people in September 1994 to prepare strategies for lessening hunger in Brazil; and the AFRO-Portuguese-Brazilian Summit held in October 1994 to discuss creation of a Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries.

Bahá’ís formed part of a delegation to China representing the Pacific Rim Institute for Development and Education (PRIDE) in June 1994. The cultural and traditional exchange program extended to five cities and included visits to schools, hospitals, institutes, universities, and Buddhist temples. Bahá’í educators and doctors presented lectures on topics such as “Education and Its Role in Human Progress” and “The Current Trend in US Medical Education.”

In December 1994, the deputy director of the Office of External Affairs of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States was invited to be a panelist at a symposium called “The United Nations at Fifty: Creating a More Democratic and Effective UN,” held at the University of Notre Dame.

Development Conferences and Agencies

Bahá’ís currently operate more than 1,300 social and economic development projects, each of which is evolving as the participants reflect on their practice, exchange ideas with others, and reach higher levels of understanding of Bahá’í principles. News of the individual projects is obviously too extensive to be reported here, but some examples can be cited of recent efforts to deepen the conversation about development and to systematize the practice of what is being learned.

Organizations such as the Uganda Bahá’í Institute for Development, established by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Uganda to consolidate and guide Bahá’í development

activities; the William Mmutle Masehla Foundation in Zambia, which has evolved into an NGO guiding a number of programs such as a secondary school for young women and a health care project; the Bayan Indigenous Social and Economic Development Association in Honduras, which has the object of raising up healthy and active Bahá’í communities through social and economic development projects among indigenous groups; and the Guyana Office of Social and Economic Development are examples of some of the new organizations that have emerged from Bahá’ís’ experiences within the field of development.

Workshops on education, the environment, health, family and youth, the role of money in Bahá’í development, and the role of Bahá’í development with native peoples were all part of the annual North American Bahá’í Conference on Social and Economic Development sponsored by the Eshraghieh and Mahmoud Rabbani Charitable Trust. More than 600 people attended the four-day event in Florida in December, discussing the issues and listening to speakers such as Mona Grieser, technical coordinator for the Bahá’í International Community/UNIFEM Project “Traditional Media as Change Agent”; Holly



Canadian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment Sheila Copps visits the Djalal Eghrari Rural Polytechnical Institute in Iranduba, Amazon, Brazil.

Hanson, author of *Social and Economic Development: A Bahá’í Perspective*; and Dr. David Ruhe and his wife, Margaret, who received the Award of Excellence for their work in this field.

December was also the time for the first conference of the Bahá’í Agency for Social and Economic Development (BASED), a new organization formed in the United Kingdom. Some 40 Bahá’ís dedicated to development met in Manchester, England, to examine the future role of the agency and how it could work

with other organizations. A new association for social and economic development was also created in South Africa in 1994.

In Kenya, the Central and East African Bahá'í Regional Development Committee was asked by the organizers of the Third International Social Studies Conference to present a talk on "The Challenging Role of Social Studies Education in the Socio-Economic Development Process Towards World Order and World Peace." The Bahá'í community was also offered 40 places at the conference, which took place in June in Nairobi.

In response to the problem of illiteracy, the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Bahá'í World Centre has begun to consolidate Bahá'ís' experience into systematic programs, beginning with pilot literacy projects in Cambodia, the Central African Republic, and Guyana.

In 1993, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Marshall Islands assumed responsibility for the administration and management of five elementary schools in the Majuro Atoll, acting upon proposals from local and national governments and from the country's President that the Bahá'ís take a role in upgrading the quality of the nation's education. In October 1994, the remaining two public elementary schools on Majuro were also placed under the supervision of the National Spiritual Assembly—an indication of the government's positive response to the work accomplished thus far.

In anticipation of national education reform in Cameroon, the National Spiritual Assembly of that country submitted a statement entitled "Education: Foundation of Sustainable Development" in French and English to the Minister of National Education and to provincial delegates for national education.

Interfaith Dialogue

In accordance with Bahá'í belief that the world's major religions are all divinely revealed and share the same essential spiritual teachings, communities initiated and participated in interfaith gatherings to promote the idea that religion is the basis of unity.

Bahá'ís began celebrating the third Sunday in January as World Religion Day in the United States in 1950, and by 1995 it was being commemorated all over the world. More than 1,000

people attended the first observance in Singapore this year, held at the Singapore Conference Hall. Ambassadors, high commissioners, representatives of diplomatic circles, and others listened as speakers from nine religious communities spoke about how their faiths could promote peace and unity. The event was opened by Professor Tommy Koh, Singapore's ambassador-at-large, director of the Institute of Policy Studies, and permanent representative to the United Nations.

In Mozambique, the Minister of Justice, Dr. Jose Ibraimo Abudo, declared the observance of World Religion Day open by lighting nine oil lamps offered by the Hindu community for the occasion. Speakers from the Bahá'í, Christian, Hindu, and Jewish communities addressed the packed amphitheater on the theme "The Fundamental Oneness of Religion."

In Londonderry, Northern Ireland, Catholics, Protestants, Bahá'ís, and Sikhs shared prayers, readings, and music during a World Religion Day commemoration at Oakgrove Integrated College. In Johannesburg, South Africa, four Bahá'í panelists answered questions on a radio call-in show about World Religion Day. In India, the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Delhi collaborated with the New Delhi YMCA to organize a panel discussion on unity in diversity to observe the day.

In honor of the International Year of Tolerance, the Bahá'ís in Spain organized a roundtable discussion on "Religious Tolerance" at the National Bahá'í Center, which was chaired by the distinguished theologian Enrique Miret Magdalena. Representatives from the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Bahá'í Faiths drafted a statement on religious tolerance which was sent to the media.

Bahá'ís participated in interfaith gatherings organized by other religious communities, such as the fourth Interreligious Prayer Meeting in Luxembourg during which each religious representative put flowers of different colors in a vase and lit a candle as a symbol of light in the darkness of intolerance. Smaller groups then discussed how individuals can "spread the seed of reconciliation." In February 1995, the Bahá'ís of Brazil took part in the Fourth Encounter for a New Consciousness, an ecumenical gathering of 1,500 people from diverse backgrounds. A Bahá'í was also a member of the official Italian delegation to the Sixth

World Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace held in November in Rome. In Sierra Leone, Bahá'ís became members of the Multi-Religious Council for Peace and Justice.

An important corner was turned in terms of public recognition of the Bahá'í Faith in the United Kingdom in April 1995. The Dean of Westminster, the Very Reverend Michael Mayne, wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom confirming that in the future the Bahá'ís will be allotted time to present a reading during the Annual Commonwealth Observance held in Westminster Abbey in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and broadcast via BBC World Service.

A special triumph for interfaith cooperation occurred in Germany in October 1994, due to the efforts of a group that included Bahá'ís. In a project eventually supported by all the major religious communities represented in Berlin and the Senate of Berlin, a "Room of Tranquillity" was dedicated in the northern gatehouse of the Brandenburg Gate to provide a place for quiet reflection for all visitors to the former Berlin Wall.

Recognition

As public understanding of the nature and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith continued to spread and deepen and Bahá'í communities grew, public institutions afforded greater legal and social recognition to the Bahá'í community. This took various forms, such as government registration of the Bahá'í Faith, approval of school or work absences on Bahá'í holy days, or official invitations for Bahá'í representation at major events.

A unique form of recognition came from the Supreme Court of India, which cited Bahá'í teachings as guidelines for solving religious disputes in its judgement on such a dispute between Hindus and Muslims. The judgement, dated 24 October 1994, related to mob violence that occurred in early 1993 sparked by controversy over a 16th century mosque said to stand on the ruins of an ancient Hindu temple honoring Lord Rama. A portion of the Supreme Court decision read, "A neutral perception of the requirement for communal harmony is to be found in the Bahá'í Faith. In a booklet, *Communal Harmony—India's Greatest Challenge*, forming part of the Bahá'í literature, it is stated thus:

'...Lasting harmony between heterogeneous communities can only come through a recognition of the oneness of mankind, a realization that differences that divide us along ethnic and religious lines have no foundation. Just as there are no boundaries drawn on the earth of separate nations, distinctions of social, economic, ethnic and religious identity imposed by peoples are artificial....'" In total, three paragraphs from the booklet on communal harmony were quoted.

The status of the Bahá'í Faith as a major religion was indirectly affirmed in Bulgaria, where four Bahá'í holy days were recognized by the Bulgarian Parliament. This means that believers are entitled to be absent from work or school without penalty on the First Day of Riḍván, Naw-Rúz, the Declaration of the Báb, and the Birthday of Bahá'u'lláh. In the Netherlands, the official Dutch Public Library Classification System (SISO) corrected its classification of the Bahá'í Faith as a sect and gave it its own classification number. In Albania, the 1995 edition of the country's Encyclopedical Calendar devotes an entire page to the Bahá'í Faith.

On 29 November 1994, the London Borough of Wandsworth's Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education produced a new Agreed Syllabus for the teaching of religious education in all the borough's schools which contains a fifteen-page section on the Bahá'í Faith. Included are an introduction to the Faith, a glossary of 70 terms, and a curriculum for teaching about the Faith at each stage of primary and secondary school.

A book called *Na Kade Chuveche?* [Where Are We Heading?], written by a member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Mr. Georgi Bliznakov, to explore the current problems of Bulgaria and their possible solutions, discusses the Bahá'í Faith as one solution in a chapter devoted to its teachings. The book was publicly introduced during a reception for leaders of thought at Sofia's Museum of Earth and Man in April 1995.

A number of invitations to high-level official functions also signalled growing recognition of the status of the Bahá'í Faith. In South Africa, the office of President Nelson Mandela sent an invitation for a representative of the Bahá'í Faith to attend the state banquet given by the President for Queen Elizabeth II. The

Bahá'í Faith was also represented at a reception hosted by the President of Romania in honor of the tricentenary of the University of Bucharest. In Turkmenistan, the chairman of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Ashkhabad represented the Bahá'í community at a reception hosted by the President for government, embassy, and religious officials. At the conclusion of the banquet, a presidential decree was issued in which the Bahá'í Faith was mentioned, thus giving it an official status.

For the first time in the history of the Bahá'í Faith in Pakistan, the government invited members of the community, as an NGO, to attend a senior officers' meeting to present their views. The meeting was held in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development. In Ethiopia, the National Spiritual Assembly was invited to attend the ceremony to mark final delivery of the approved draft of the new Ethiopian constitution to the head of state.

Legal recognition was formally granted the Bahá'í Faith in several countries this year. The government of Mexico approved registration of the Bahá'í Faith in that country in June 1994, and the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Mexico was registered 20 January 1995. The Bahá'í Faith was officially recognized in Serbia 18 October 1994. In December 1994, the National Spiritual Assembly of Kazakhstan was registered as a religious body with the Ministry of Justice. The national Bahá'í community of Nepal was legally registered in February 1995.

Update: The Situation of THE BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN

Since 1979, the Bahá'í community in Iran, numbering some 350,000, has been systematically persecuted, harassed, and discriminated against in a variety of ways by the governing regime. More than 200 Bahá'ís have been killed or have disappeared and are presumed dead, and as of August 1994 seven Bahá'ís were still held in prisons because of their religious beliefs; three death sentences still stand.

It is now estimated that some 15,000 Bahá'í graves were desecrated in the summer of 1993, when authorities bulldozed the oldest Bahá'í cemetery in Tehran to make way for an Islamic cultural center, leaving the Bahá'ís only a wasteland for their use where they are not permitted to mark graves of their loved ones.¹ Many other Bahá'í properties, some belonging to widows of Bahá'ís who have been executed, have also been seized by the government.

Bahá'ís can expect little satisfaction in the country's Islamic legal system. In one case, two Muslims who killed a Bahá'í were

1. For further details, see *The Bahá'í World 1993-94*, pp. 139-145.

released from prison because the person they killed was “an unprotected infidel.” Bahá’í marriages and divorces are not recognized, and Bahá’ís may not legally inherit property. It is extremely difficult for them to obtain passports and exit visas to travel outside the country. With regard to education, Bahá’í youth are systematically barred from institutions of higher education such as colleges and universities. Bahá’ís even experience difficulties in circulating Bahá’í literature within their own community.

The Faith’s members in Iran also suffer great economic hardship. More than 10,000 have been dismissed from positions in government and public education, pensions have been revoked, and in some cases Bahá’ís have been required to return salaries and pensions received. Bahá’í farmers are prevented from joining farmers’ cooperatives, often the only source of credit, seeds, pesticide, and fertilizer. Private companies have often been compelled to discharge members of the Faith, and in some locations Bahá’ís have been prevented from operating their own businesses.

In 1993 the Special Representative of the United Nations Human Rights Commission revealed the existence of a secret official document asserting that the government will treat Bahá’ís “such that their progress and development shall be blocked” and urging the development of a plan to uproot the cultural foundations of the Bahá’í community outside Iran. This official policy statement provides ample demonstration that the international community must continue to monitor the situation to ensure that the treatment of Iran’s Bahá’ís does not deteriorate even further. During 1994–95, both the United States and the United Nations acted to keep the spotlight of international pressure on the government of that country.

In the United States

Following on the US Senate resolution “Concerning the Emancipation of the Iranian Bahá’í Community,” passed unanimously by both the Senate, in November 1993, and the House of Representatives, in April 1994—the sixth such concurrent resolution passed since 1982—a group of five Senators from both major

parties wrote a letter to President Clinton on 21 July 1994. In it, they expressed their concern over the “officially-sponsored repression that has been directed against Bahá’ís since the Iranian Revolution” and urged the US administration “to continue its leadership and diplomatic efforts on the issue of the Bahá’ís and to continue to speak out in support of the cause of tolerance and freedom in Iran through the Voice of America and other appropriate public channels.” The letter noted that the Bahá’ís of Iran “continue to be singled out for persecution based on their religious beliefs.”

In response, a 23 August 1994 letter from President Clinton to the Chairman of the Senate expressed concern over the situation of the Bahá’ís in Iran, praising the Senate resolution as “a useful reminder that we must continue to be vigilant in calling attention to the plight of the Bahá’ís” and promising that his administration “will continue to work to create an international consensus to influence Iran to change its behavior on human rights.”

United Nations

The interim report of the Special Representative on Iran, Professor Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, to the United Nations General Assembly included eight paragraphs on the Iranian Bahá’í community. Canada, Ireland, Sweden, and Germany (representing the European Union) made specific mention of the Bahá’ís in their oral presentations to the Third Committee, the General Assembly’s social, humanitarian, and cultural committee that includes all United Nations members. On 13 December 1994, the Third Committee of the 49th session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted another strongly-worded resolution on Iran, with specific mention of the Bahá’ís. The resolution was adopted with a vote of 68 in favor and 23 against, with 56 abstentions.

Shortly after, on 23 December 1994, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution condemning human rights abuses in Iran, with specific mention of the Bahá’ís in two paragraphs, noting the “discriminatory treatment of minorities for reason of their religious beliefs, notably the Bahá’ís, whose existence as a viable religious community is threatened.” The

General Assembly also resolved to “continue examination of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran including the situation of minority groups, such as the Bahá’ís, during its fiftieth session under the item entitled ‘Human Rights Questions’ in the light of additional elements provided by the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council.” The resolution was cosponsored by 27 countries, with 74 voting in favor, 25 against, and 55 abstentions. A further 31 countries did not participate in the vote.

The Bahá’í International Community was active at the 51st session of the UN Human Rights Commission, making an oral statement during its meeting in Geneva between 29 January and 10 March 1995. The statement reviewed the unrelenting economic strangulation to which the Bahá’í community has been subjected, the barring of Bahá’ís from institutions of higher learning in Iran, the destruction and desecration of Bahá’í properties, including cemeteries and holy places, and the denial of basic economic, social, and civil rights. On 8 March 1995, by a vote of 28 to 8, the UN Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution condemning the continued violation of human rights in Iran, taking particular note of the situation of the Bahá’í community there. Like the General Assembly resolution, the Human Rights Commission resolution noted that the Bahá’ís’ “existence as a viable religious community...is threatened.” This was the thirteenth resolution since 1983 expressing concern over human rights violations in Iran and taking note of the Bahá’í community’s special situation. Before the General Assembly and the Commission acted, resolutions concerning the human rights situation in Iran, that included specific mention of the Bahá’ís, were passed by both the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities.

In the News

Newspapers around the world continued to mention the Iranian Bahá’í community, particularly with regard to the country’s human rights situation. Some highlights of this coverage follow.

The persecution of Iran’s Bahá’ís was mentioned as a matter

of course in numerous newspaper articles focusing on abuses perpetrated against other religious leaders, notably Christians, in that country during 1994. Publications such as the *International Herald Tribune*, the *New York Times*, and London’s newspapers the *Guardian*, the *Universe*, and the *Times* mentioned the Bahá’í community in this connection. Egypt’s newspaper *Al-Ahrám* reported on the UN Human Rights Commission resolution condemning Iran’s human rights violations and specifically mentioned the Bahá’ís, as did Belgian newspapers such as *Le Soir*. Papers in Taiwan and Ireland also mentioned the persecution of Iran’s Bahá’ís.

A report about the US Senators’ letter and President Clinton’s reply appeared in the *Iran Times International* of Washington, DC, in September 1994 and was reprinted elsewhere, including in France’s *Revue de la presse arabe, iraniennne et turque* later the same month. The Voice of America Persian Service also broadcast an editorial about the Senators’ resolution, which drew an angry response from one ayatollah the following Friday in his prayer sermon at Tehran University.

Olya Roohizadegan, whose book *Olya’s Story* chronicles her imprisonment with other Bahá’í women following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, continued to travel widely during 1994–95 to promote the publication. Among the newspapers covering her visits in the US were the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Phoenix Gazette*, the *Dallas Morning News*, and the *San Jose Mercury News*. During her travels in Ireland, the *Evening Press* and Ulster’s *Sunday World*, as well as other papers, printed stories about her experiences.

Conclusion

Principles of the Bahá’í Faith require Bahá’ís to be obedient to the government of the country in which they live, and so the community has never posed, nor does it now pose, any threat to the authorities. In 1983, when ordered to disband its elected administrative system that organizes community life, Iran’s Bahá’í community obeyed. The persecution is based solely on the members’ religious beliefs, and the Bahá’ís have been consistently offered their lives, their freedom, and the return of their property

if they will recant their faith. The Bahá'ís of Iran, who desire only their basic rights as outlined in the International Bill of Human Rights, have suffered for fifteen years. In support of their spiritual brothers and sisters, Bahá'ís around the world have made use of the few avenues of appeal open to them, including the UN human rights system and direct access to governments through National Spiritual Assemblies. In 1994–95, there was ample evidence that both governments and international agencies were still keenly aware of their situation.

THE BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY: Activities 1994–95

The Bahá'í International Community has a long history of involvement with the United Nations in its capacity as a non-governmental organization (NGO).¹ With 172 national affiliates around the world, offices in New York, Paris, and Geneva, and representations to Regional United Nations Offices in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Nairobi, Rome, Santiago, and Vienna, the Bahá'í International Community is one of the most diverse and global NGOs in the world. Addressing issues such as peace, human rights, the equality of women and men, the environment, health, education, and social and economic development, the Bahá'í International Community has in recent years established an Office of the Environment and an Office for the Advancement of Women in addition to its permanent United Nations Office. An Office of Public Information, based at the Bahá'í World Centre and with branches in Paris and London, disseminates

1. The history of the Bahá'í International Community's work at the United Nations is described in *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 19 (1983–86), pp. 378–397. See also *The Bahá'í World 1993–94*, pp. 131–138.

information about the Bahá'í Faith around the world and oversees the production of an award-winning quarterly newsletter, *One Country*.²

Highlights

During 1994–95, the Bahá'í International Community was involved in a wide variety of activities around the globe, but among all these several stand out as highlights.

The first, an international symposium sponsored by the Bahá'í International Community on “Strategies for Creating Violence-Free Families,” was held 23–25 May 1994 at UNICEF House, New York, as a contribution towards the observance of the International Year of the Family. The symposium was initiated by the Bahá'í International Community Office for the Advancement of Women, with the collaboration of both the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Bringing together 50 international experts in the area of family violence, including senior NGO officers and those working in the legal, medical, psychological, and sociological fields, representing all regions of the world, the Office for the Advancement of Women sought to develop positive, coordinated, action-oriented solutions to what is now recognized as a global problem. The concrete objective of the gathering was to create a document and plan of action to be shared with governments, non-governmental agencies, and educational institutions worldwide. Keynote speaker for the event was Dr. H.B. Danesh, currently director of the Institute for International Education and Development in Wienacht, Switzerland, and author of *The Violence-Free Society: A Gift for Our Children* and other works. Dr. Danesh, an international consultant with over 30 years of experience in the fields of psychiatry, community development, ethics, and world order studies, said:

Of all the forms of violence that are committed by people against one another, two demand particular attention. First is

2. An article about *One Country* appears on pp. 305–310 of this volume.

violence against women, which is global, occurring across lines of culture, race, educational attainment, religion, and economic status, affecting the very foundations of human civilization. In this destructive drama, women of the world suffer levels of pain, humiliation, injustice, and misery that cannot be tolerated by any civilized community.

Second is the violence against the children and youth of the world. Never in recorded history have so many children been reported victims of direct or indirect violence. In addition to millions of children caught in the war zones between nations and in the inner cities in all countries of the world, there are many times more children living in homes where abuse takes place routinely; where no parenting is done, no healthy example is set, no education except for the violent input of television, radio, and other audiovisual productions is provided.

In addition to the principal victims of violence, there is yet a third group whose psyche and spirit are profoundly damaged by the prevalence of violence in our world, yet who are almost totally unaware of it. To this group belong the perpetrators of violence themselves.

Because family is the building block of the society and the first and main place for the upbringing and education of every new generation, it is therefore no exaggeration to state that the key to the establishment of a peaceful, prosperous, and civilized world is the violence-free family.

The organizers and participants all deemed the symposium a valuable contribution to dialogue on this subject. A videotape of the plenary sessions was produced, and UNICEF published a symposium summary report that has been widely distributed at national and international conferences such as the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and at regional preparatory meetings for the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Argentina, Jordan, and Austria. Copies were also circulated at a major international conference on family violence sponsored by the International Council of Women in the Netherlands. The report and Dr. Danesh's keynote speech were published as a booklet, entitled *The Violence-Free Family: Building Block of a Peaceful Civilization*, in the spring of 1995 by the Association for Bahá'í Studies in collaboration with the Office for the Advancement of Women. The Bahá'í International

Community's role in initiating the symposium demonstrated the Faith's clear vision of family life that eliminates the need for violent communication, and showed how this vision is grounded in spirituality. Participants were not hesitant to acknowledge the spiritual dimension of the solution to the problems of violence and the relationship between healing the family and eventual world peace. Further collaboration among the Bahá'í International Community, UNICEF, and International Women's Rights Action Watch resulted in the sponsorship of a workshop on family violence at the regional preparatory meeting of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Vienna, entitled "Bringing Human Rights Home: Creating Violence-Free Families and Communities." Collaborative workshops also took place at various prepcoms for the FWCW.

A second highlight of the year occurred in London on 28 July 1994, with the holding of the World Forestry Charter Gathering at St. James's Palace. This initiative of the Bahá'í International Community Offices of the Environment and Public Information brought together diverse personalities representing aristocratic, business, environmental, and religious sectors of society in order to give stimulus to the issue of a legally binding agreement on forestry for all countries. The effort arose from the non-binding set of Forestry Principles formulated at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It was hoped that the coming together of representatives from various sectors would lay the groundwork for a binding Convention as well as contribute to discussions of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, which was to take up the issue of forests in 1995. His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, who is president of the World Wide Fund for Nature, addressed the gathering, as did Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm, leading dignitary in the Bahá'í Faith.

The World Forestry Charter Gatherings were originally instituted by early environmentalist Richard St. Barbe Baker in 1945. Continuing through the 1950s and 1960s, they inspired a number of efforts at global cooperation in environmental matters. The Gatherings were revived by the Bahá'í International Community Office of Public Information in 1989, the 100th anniversary of St. Barbe Baker's birth, to honor their fellow



HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, welcomes Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm to St. James's Palace, London, venue for the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering. Looking on are Ms. Guilda Walker, left, who organized the event for the Bahá'í International Community, and Mrs. Violette Nakhjaváni, extreme right.

Bahá'í's commitment to the environment. Some 200 ambassadors, businesspeople, and NGO representatives attended the diplomatic luncheon, representing more than 30 countries. In addition, some seventeen governments sent official messages to the Gathering, including eight heads of state or government.

A third highlight of the year was the Bahá'í International Community's participation in the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995. Activities undertaken during this event were so numerous that a separate article has been devoted to them.³

Aside from highlights such as these, the Bahá'í International Community was involved in many other activities, a brief survey of which follows.

Meetings

During 1994-95, Bahá'í International Community representatives chaired two important meetings on Human Rights at the

3. See pp. 37-46.

United Nations. The first was the International Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Human Rights, held 18 May 1994 on the theme "An Overview of the 50th Session of the Commission on Human Rights" and including over 50 NGOs and representatives of twelve UN missions. The second was a conference organized by the UN Commission on Human Rights, entitled "Women's issues in the UN human rights machinery—latest developments." It was held 15 June, with speakers from the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations, a representative of the UN Division on the Advancement of Women in New York, and an expert who is a consultant to UNICEF. The Bahá'í International Community also attended as observer the extraordinary session of the UN Commission on Human Rights held 24–25 May 1994 in Geneva to consider the situation in Rwanda.⁴

Other meetings and UN sessions monitored by the Bahá'í International Community included the World Health Assembly in Geneva, 2–12 May 1994; the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York, 16–27 May 1994; and the 1994 Substantive Meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), 27 June–29 July 1994. A Bahá'í International Community representative currently holds the chair of the United Nations NGO Committee on the Family.

Publications

Aside from the numerous statements made by the Bahá'í International Community during the year, a number of publications by the Office of Public Information were released in various languages. The journalists' handbook *The Bahá'ís*, already available in English and French, is now published in Spanish as well. *The Prosperity of Humankind*, released by the Bahá'í International Community in late January 1995, was available in English, French, Spanish, and Danish at the World Summit for

4. For details on the Bahá'í International Community's activities with regard to the human rights situation of the Bahá'í community in Iran, see pp. 133–138.

Social Development⁵ and was subsequently translated into numerous other languages. The booklet *The Bahá'í Question*, prepared by the United Nations Office and detailing the persecution of the Iranian Bahá'í community, was made available in French and Spanish. In collaboration with the International Council of Jewish Women and the World Federation of United Nations Associations, the Bahá'í International Community also produced a booklet entitled *Education on the Convention on the Rights of the Child* on behalf of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Published in English, French, and Spanish, the book is being distributed by UNICEF to all its regional branches throughout the world.

Activities of the Office for the Advancement of Women

In addition to the symposium on violence in the family, the Office for the Advancement of Women engaged in a number of other projects and activities, some new and some ongoing.

The video *Two Wings*, based on the Traditional Media as Change Agent project with UNIFEM and including an interview with Marjorie Thorpe, Deputy Director of UNIFEM, was released and has been extremely popular with a wide range of audiences. Much of the footage in the video, which was filmed by the project participants themselves, documents this unique communication project that was designed to raise the status of women in three countries: Bolivia, Cameroon, and Malaysia. Employing traditional music, dance, and folktales to demonstrate the obstacles that women face every day, both women and men examined the spiritual, cultural, and social values that determine men's and women's status, in order to develop community action for change. They then began the first tentative steps towards making a deliberate change in their behavior and acquiring new values more in line with their vision of their community.⁶ The Traditional Media as Change Agent project will continue, with

5. The full text of this statement appears on pp. 273–296.

6. For a full description of this project, see *The Bahá'í World 1993–94*, pp. 259–263.

additional financial support from UNIFEM, and the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Cameroon has signed a contract with the UNDP for a grinding mill to be used in the villages where the traditional media project took place.

The Office for the Advancement of Women undertook a survey of women's participation in Bahá'í community life, producing a report on the survey for the FWCW in Beijing. In other preparations for the conference, the director of the Office for the Advancement of Women served as Chair of the New York Commission on the Status of Women and took a major role in the planning process for the NGO Forum, traveling a number of times to China in the course of the year. The Office also did a number of mailings to National Spiritual Assemblies around the world, informing them about the conference and the Bahá'í International Community's role in it. Early in 1994, Bahá'í International Community representatives attended the Inter-session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the focus of which was to continue drafting the Platform of Action for the FWCW. In August 1994, a Bahá'í International Community representative to the NGO preparatory meeting in Turku, Finland, made presentations and did a workshop on the Traditional Media as Change Agent project. At the conclusion of the meeting, UNIFEM's Marjorie Thorpe spoke for approximately ten minutes about the project during her address to the conference. Workshops on the project occurred at other Regional Preparatory Conferences around the world as well. A Bahá'í International

Lois Hainsworth (left), UK member of the Bahá'í International Community delegation to the ECE PrepCom for the FWCW, greets Queen Fabiola of Belgium, as Eleanore Hauer-Rona of the Austrian National Council of Women looks on.



Community representative also attended the regional Youth Consultation of the European Regional Preparatory Conference for the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Vienna 13–17 October; other such Youth Consultations had previously taken place in the Asia–Pacific and Latin American regions, where Bahá'ís were also present.

The Office for the Advancement of Women made a statement to the 39th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, 15 March–4 April 1995, on the promotion of literacy, education, and training, including technological skills, and a Bahá'í International Community representative attended as an observer-participant the Budapest Symposium on “Families as Educators for Global Citizenship,” held 15–17 December 1994 and sponsored by the Institute of Family and Environmental Research. The Bahá'í Faith was the only religion represented at the event, which involved 30 experts in the field from over 20 countries.

Activities of the Office of the Environment

Among the activities undertaken by the Office of the Environment was the addition of soil from thirteen countries to the peace monument in Rio de Janeiro on World Environment Day in June 1994. The peace monument is a joint, ongoing project of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Brazil and the Bahá'í International Community Office of the Environment, with the support of the Mayor's Office of Rio de Janeiro. The monument was originally created as an enduring symbol of the new spirit of global cooperation that characterized the Earth Summit and the '92 Global Forum. Soil from 40 countries was deposited in the hourglass-shaped monument during the official closing ceremonies of those twin events, and soil from a further 15 nations was added the following year. With the contributions this year, the total stands at 68. Soil from other countries will be added each year until the time when all the world's countries will have contributed to the monument.⁷

7. For a more detailed look at the inaugural ceremonies and the Bahá'í International Community's activities during the Earth Summit and NGO Forum in Rio de Janeiro, see *The Bahá'í World 1992–93*, pp. 177–189.

The Bahá'í International Community's statement *World Citizenship: A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development* continued to receive strong positive feedback from around the world during the year.⁸ The executive director of the US Coalition of Education for All requested 500 copies which were sent out to all Coalition members with a cover letter stating that the ideas in the statement should be promoted worldwide in the Education for All movement. An NGO in Cameroon showed interest in further exploring the concepts set forth in the statement, while the international relations department at the University of Pittsburgh reproduced the statement for use in a seminar on equipping cities with essential knowledge and attitudes in preparation for an interdependent world.

The Office of the Environment worked with the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom on its involvement in the "Global Forum '94: Cities and Sustainable Development" held in Manchester, United Kingdom, 24 June–3 July 1994, and advised the National Spiritual Assembly of Barbados, which was involved in organizing the parallel NGO Forum to the United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados 25 April–6 May 1994. Bahá'í International Community representatives also took part in the NGO Forum occurring in conjunction with the United Nations Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in September 1994, conducting workshops at the event.

On the other side of the globe the following spring, Counsellor Kimiko Schwerin and Mr. Lawrence Arturo, director of the Office of the Environment, represented the Bahá'í Faith at the first session of the Summit on Religions and Conservation in Japan. Other participants included Buddhist leader and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Somdech Preah Mah Ghosananda; His All Holiness The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Head of the world's four million Orthodox Christians; Jain representative and Indian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom His Excellency Dr. L.M. Singhvi; Rabbi Professor Nahum Rakover

8. For the full text of this statement, see *The Bahá'í World 1993–94*, pp. 295–304.



The giant puppets "Hope" and "Horror" greeted participants at the entrance to the NGO display area at the United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in the spring of 1994. "Hope," made of sailcloth and natural materials, symbolized nature and the human spirit. "Horror," made of discarded auto parts, a broken television, and other refuse, symbolized greed, suspicion, and selfishness. The puppets were contributed to the Conference by members of the Bahá'í community.

of the Jewish community, who is the Associate Director General of the Israel Justice Ministry; and Taoist representative Mr. Zhang Ji Yu, Vice Secretary of the People's Republic of China Taoist Association. One of the three sponsoring organizations, MOA International (Mokichi Okada Association), seeks to promote a new global civilization based on a harmonious balance between the spiritual and the material realities. The Bahá'í delegation shared various Bahá'í presentations during the working sessions, was represented during the official opening and closing ceremonies, and interacted extensively with conference participants, members of MOA International, and members of the Japanese Diet, discussing Bahá'í theology, administration, development efforts, and external affairs activities.

Conclusion

The Bahá'í International Community, working with National Spiritual Assemblies around the world, undertook numerous and varied activities during 1994–95, mainly focusing on women, the environment, and human rights. This was done through publications, sponsorship of symposia, collaboration with other organizations, ongoing projects, and diplomatic work. Certain highlights, such as the World Forestry Charter Gathering in London, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, and the symposium on family violence in New York, marked the year, but numerous other endeavors, enacted on a smaller scale in various parts of the globe, also helped the Bahá'í International Community pursue its cherished goals of promoting the establishment of a peaceful planetary civilization.

This article highlights print media, television, and radio coverage of the Bahá'í Faith during 1994–95.

The Bahá'í Faith in the **EYES OF THE WORLD**

This year's survey of worldwide media coverage of the Bahá'í Faith includes print media, radio, and television.¹ In a year without the kind of major news events that have in the past attracted significant attention from the press, such as the second Bahá'í World Congress or the desecration of Bahá'í graves in Iran, coverage still proved steady.

Print Media

Of particular note this year was an increase in the number of articles devoted to Bahá'í work in the area of community development. Local papers all over the world reported on actions being taken by Bahá'ís to promote racial unity, improve education, protect the environment, address health care needs, and raise to the level of principle current debates about critical

1. For an historical overview of media coverage of the Bahá'í Faith since its inception, see *The Bahá'í World 1992–93*, pp. 147–167. The media survey in *The Bahá'í World 1993–94*, pp. 151–168, concerns itself with print media only during that period.

issues facing society. Other topics receiving significant enough coverage to warrant their own categories were Bahá'í involvement in the International Year of the Family, promotion of the advancement of women, Bahá'í community life, Bahá'í artists, interfaith dialogue, teaching the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'í properties, and response to attacks and misrepresentation.

Community Development

Faced with Bahá'u'lláh's command to evolve a new world civilization, Bahá'ís engaged in a wide variety of activities aimed at finding practical expression for such principles as justice, equality, and excellence. Their initiatives in community development, particularly in the areas of education, health care, environmental protection, and racial unity, were judged worthy of press coverage by a range of publications.

"Bahá'ís host reception to honor region's educators" was the headline of one article in the *Marianas Variety News and Views*; "Bahá'í prize distribution held" in India's *Free Press* described the conclusion of an essay contest on the importance of moral education; and "Bahá'í inst. listed by UNESCO journal" in *The Garha Chronicle* of India reported on the listing of the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women, Indore, in UNESCO's yearly journal noting organizations that introduce and implement innovative methods of education in rural areas. Other examples of education-related stories include reporting on a Bahá'í-sponsored program for teachers on world citizenship in Mauritius, the visit of a Bahá'í to help establish a technical college in Malaysia, and the trip to the United States of the co-founder of Brazil's School of the Nations.

"Bahá'í eye team donate skills and money" printed in *Dominica's Tropical Star* was one of many articles documenting the volunteer efforts of Bahá'í health professionals. Reporters wrote about Bahá'í initiatives to renovate a hospital and establish a mobile care project in Guyana and provide free medical examinations and basic treatment in India, Romania, and Malaysia. A roundtable discussion on health sponsored by the Bahá'ís of the Canary Islands was reported, and the annual European Bahá'í Medical Conference held in the Netherlands was noted in a newspaper in Hungary.

On the subject of environmental protection, the international children's art exhibit sponsored by the Bahá'í Office of the Environment for Taiwan garnered excellent press coverage. The exhibit, which included 220 paintings from around the world on the topic "Our Fragile Environment," was reported in the *China Post*, *Free China Journal*, *China News*, the magazine *Free China Review*, and by Reuters news service. The *China Post* also ran a profile of Taiwan's Office of the Environment under the headline "Bahá'í faith spreads peace and justice." The Bahá'í-sponsored World Forestry Charter Gathering in London was reported in locations as far away as Ghana and Guyana. The deposit of soil from eleven more nations into Brazil's Peace Monument on World Environment Day was reported in El Salvador, celebrations of Earth Day were reported in Peru, and activities for Environment Day were noted in the Canary Islands.

Readers of the *Traverse City Record-Eagle* (Michigan) on 10 September 1994 saw the headline "Bahá'ís work for multicultural harmony," one of numerous such stories printed in the United States. An interfaith discussion on racism was reported in the *Louisville* (Kentucky) *Defender*, a Martin Luther King Jr. Day forum on the topic in the *Times-News* (North Carolina), and a regular supper club devoted to cultural exchange in the *Sioux City* (Iowa) *Journal*. Efforts by Bahá'ís in other countries to build unity between peoples of different backgrounds also appeared in print; these included an international understanding celebration in Germany which resulted in at least five articles, an international cultural evening in Norway, a cultural exchange program arranged for high school students in Australia, and an editorial by a Bahá'í in Panama calling for tolerance.

In addition to working on education and health care, elements of community development, Bahá'ís contributed to public conversations at all levels about the interwoven issues that collectively constitute social and economic development. At the international level, Bahá'í participation in the United Nations Conference on Population and Development in Cairo was mentioned in the *New York Times* and by Reuters news service. Bahá'í involvement in the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen was reported in a number of countries,

including Uganda, where a press conference held near the Bahá'í House of Worship in Kampala following the Summit resulted in an article with the headline "Bahá'í community says new global economic models required for dev't." Among the articles printed in Denmark was one featuring a large photograph of the Bahá'í booth at the NGO Forum.

On local and national levels, Bahá'í-sponsored editorials on the applicability of Bahá'í teachings to the challenges of the day appeared, for example, in India, Panama, Hawaii, and New Zealand. Journalists covered seminars and public meetings addressing topics such as violence (*Pacific Daily News* in Guam), the prosperity of humankind (*Macau Daily News*), and human rights (the *Star* in Pakistan). They also wrote about seminars on the role of the media in society held in Honduras and El Salvador, the latter taking place during a Bahá'í-sponsored World Press Exhibition which itself received much coverage. The *Ethiopian Herald* and *Addis Zemen* wrote about the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ethiopia submitting a document to the Constitution Drafting Commission.

One project initiated to meet an immediate community need was a concert organized in the Canary Islands to raise money for Rwandan refugees. At least five articles reported on this event.

International Year of the Family

Bahá'í-sponsored exhibits, lectures, seminars, conferences, celebrations, and publications in observance of the International Year of the Family (IYF) all received press coverage.² "Bahá'ís Advocate For Strong Family Bonds" was the headline of one article in Namibia (*New Era*, 2 June 1994) which explained that "Bahá'ís believe it is possible to combine traditional values with progressive social principles in a way that could provide a bulwark against the forces of social disintegration in the modern age. And this must start with family unity."

The importance of family unity as a basis for unity in communities and among nations and the need for that unity to rest on a foundation of equality and justice were among the

2. For a more thorough overview of Bahá'í contributions to IYF, see pp. 47-63.

Bahá'í teachings expressed through different vehicles during the year. A large number of articles on Bahá'í activities were published in New Zealand, where an art and poetry competition on the subject was held, local lectures were presented, seminars offered, and a statement by the National Spiritual Assembly on domestic violence prepared. Other countries where Bahá'ís received a substantial amount of press coverage include Australia, the site of the Gold Coast Family Expo, and India, where a seminar on the important relationship between the education of women and healthy families was reported in five newspapers.

"Bahá'ís teach value of family," printed in the *Times of Papua New Guinea*, provided almost a full page of background material on Bahá'í teachings as part of an article announcing an upcoming family life seminar. A full-page article outlining the Bahá'í perspective on the family was printed in Panama's *La Prensa*. The commemoration of IYF by the Bahá'ís of Macau generated a two-page article with photographs explaining teachings on the family and other subjects. In Salt Spring Island, Canada, a "celebration of the human family," resulted in an article entitled, "Family is base of world, speaker says, as Bahá'ís mark international year."

Advancement of Women

The press demonstrated interest in conferences, seminars, and lectures sponsored by Bahá'ís to address issues related to the advancement of women. A significant amount of coverage was received by one three-day national conference in India on the role women will play in establishing peace. Other events reported include seminars in Hawaii and Australia on domestic violence, a Bahá'í institute on equality in Cameroon, a gathering in Singapore in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, a talk in the Czech Republic on women of the future, and a speech in the US by Judge Dorothy Nelson on the role of women in bringing about universal peace.

The participation of Bahá'í delegates from Macau in the first East Asia Women's Discussion held in Japan was noted in five articles in Macau. Bahá'ís also took part in an exchange of views and experiences between women from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland which was reported in the *Irish Times*.

The work of the Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women in Indore, India, continued to become better known, with extensive profiles of its work printed in the *Star* (a national newspaper in Malaysia) and in the *Sunday Observer* (Sri Lanka). The former article, under the headline "The heart of self-help" begins with the words, "In the heart of India, beats the pulse of an institute that has helped revolutionise the status of women in rural areas." The latter article, entitled "A novel way to uplift rural women," is introduced this way: "Bahá'í International Community Asian Counsellor, Zena Sorabjee talks about breaking down prejudices among rural Indian and tribal Indian women via a novel education and training program which could be adopted for the emancipation of our rural women too."

Bahá'í Community Life

The aspects of Bahá'í community life most reported in the press were commemorations of holy days and elections of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies. This year marked the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb, and this fact was noted in a number of newspapers.

Several large articles on Bahá'í holy days, accompanied by photographs, appeared in the United States. The *Houston Chronicle* printed a feature on the local community's celebration of the anniversary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh and the 100th anniversary of the first public mention of the Faith in North America. The article included interviews with interracial couples about unity, an explanation of the basic teachings of the Faith, and photographs of dancers at the celebration of the 100th anniversary. A full-page article in the *Daily Californian* entitled "Celebrating Paradise" described a commemoration of Ridván. The piece included a map showing the route Bahá'u'lláh took following his exile from Persia. An overview of basic Bahá'í teachings was included in a *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and *Sun* article on the community's commemoration of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh there.

Holy days were reported in widely diverse locations. Readers in Greece and Pakistan, for example, learned about the Martyrdom of the Báb; in the Czech Republic and New Zealand about the period of the Fast; and in Zaire, India, and El Salvador about

the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh. The holy day most reported was Naw-Rúz, the Bahá'í New Year (March 21). Articles about this festive day appeared in Guyana, Hungary, St. Vincent, Belgium, Botswana, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and in Singapore, where the celebration was attended by the former president of the country, Dr. Wee Kim Wee.

The 150th anniversary of the Bahá'í Faith was celebrated on 23 May 1994, and it attracted the attention of journalists in France, Panama, Norway, Ethiopia, New Zealand, the Dominican Republic, and Ireland, among other places. Numerous articles were printed by local papers throughout Germany, the Netherlands, and Australia. The national newspaper of Cyprus, *Alitheia*, printed a large feature on the Bahá'í Faith, including an interview with a member of the community and a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, after being notified of this significant anniversary.

Among the many articles which reported on elections of Local Spiritual Assemblies and National Conventions, several stand out. The first Bahá'í election in Cambodia was reported in the *Phnom Penh Post*. Following the National Convention in Samoa, the *Samoa Observer* carried a large photograph of all the participants under the headline, "May peace be with you!" In Sri Lanka, the front page of the *Island Saturday Magazine* on 7 May 1994 was covered with photographs and information about the Bahá'í Faith, based on an interview with a participant in the National Convention there.

Bahá'í Artists

"Bahá'í faith to celebrate the human spirit" was the headline of an article in Canada's *Cowichan News Leader* which began, "Art and belief in human potential will meet in Spirit Works 1995 on Feb. 24 and 25 at the Native Heritage Centre." The event, described by organizers as a collaboration by Island artists who share a common vision of a peaceful global society based on spiritual principles, resulted in several large articles with photographs of performers. Another artistic presentation which received considerable local press coverage was the performance in Norway of a street theater piece called *Prisoner of Akka*. The drama deals with the differences between eastern and western worldviews, particularly regarding the relative value given to

religion and science. It was performed by Bahá'í Youth Theater with support from the Norwegian Cultural Office.

Other performances or exhibits drawing the attention of the press included two showings of photographer Donald Camp's portraits of African American men at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (*Delaware County Daily Times*), the Sande Webster Gallery and Swarthmore College's List Gallery (*Philadelphia Inquirer*); Wildfire World Theater's show in the Czech Republic; and exhibitions of paintings by artists George Fleming in Ireland, Nasrin Gjerø in Denmark, Tooraj Djahangirloo in Norway (three articles), and Keith Eldridge in Canada. Actor and comedian Omid Djalili's one-man performances of *A Strange Bit of History*, written by Annabel Knight, and *Short Fat Kebab-Shop Owner's Son* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and in Copenhagen drew rave reviews. The *Stage* called the first piece "World Class," and the reviewer for the *Scotsman* said, "Every character is realised in brilliantly distinct detail with the poet's verses; a cunning mix of merciless send-up and underlying seriousness." Writing about the latter piece, the *Independent* reviewer said, "This is a bravura, hilarious, physical performance," and the *Scotsman* wrote, "Omid Djalili had us in the aisles from the moment he swept on stage...."

Bahá'í Youth Workshops, groups which use dance, drama, and music to express the principles of the Bahá'í Faith, also received press coverage. The Vancouver (Canada) Workshop's travels to the Cook Islands and Hawaii resulted in several articles, and one of the many articles about local performances of New Zealand's Youth for One World began, "YOW! They were brilliant, they were talented, they were entertaining and they were from the Bahá'í faith." A front page article in the *Simi Valley* (California) *Enterprise* about performances of the Los Angeles Bahá'í Youth Workshop at a junior high school began with the headline, "Dancers promote racial harmony."

Interfaith Dialogue

The celebration of World Religion Day was one type of interfaith activity covered by the media. Singapore's first observance of this day, which drew 1,000 people to a day-long conference with representatives of nine faiths, was reported by United Press

International and at least three Singapore papers. In the United States, the *Baltimore Sun* ran a story with the headline "Other faiths to help Bahá'is mark World Religion Day." In Mozambique, the Minister of Justice spoke at the World Religion Day observance, which was reported in *Notícias*.

Bahá'is participated in many interfaith prayer services, and one that received prominent coverage took place in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. The front page of the *Atlanta Constitution* on 9 January 1995 carried a photograph of the joyous Atlanta Bahá'í Choir performing at the nineteenth annual interfaith service honoring the birth of Martin Luther King Jr., and an article inside described the event.

One example of interfaith cooperation that caught the attention of journalists was a year-long project in Norway to write an ecological manifesto that could be agreed upon by followers of different faiths. Representatives of eight religious groups, including Bahá'is, worked together to write "A Living Earth in a Crisis—A Common Calling to a Spiritual Awakening." At least four large articles in Oslo covered the project.

Press clippings related to major religions revealed growing public awareness and recognition of the Faith. A weekly paper in the United Kingdom reported that Bahá'is were invited to take part in the International Sacred Literature Trust launched by HRH the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, in July 1994, a project aiming to publish the "spiritual heritage" of the world's different faiths. In Norway, a children's ombudsman called for replacing the school system's exclusive teaching of Christianity with an approach that includes education about many religions, and he specifically mentioned the Bahá'í Faith. When American columnist Ann Landers responded to a letter about a Christian movement to promote chastity among young people, she mentioned her regret that the movement was for Christians only and did not acknowledge other religions, such as the Bahá'í Faith, that also "promote family values."

Journalists demonstrated their increasing recognition of the significance of the Bahá'í Faith by including it in articles about major religions. A chart showing major religious holidays which was printed in a Swiss newspaper included explanations of

Bahá'í holy days. Also in Switzerland, it was reported that a flyer about six major religions being sent to schools included information on the Bahá'í Faith. An article in Ireland about traditional commemorations of the birth of children mentioned Bahá'í practices. The Bahá'í ringstone symbol was explained in an Italian newspaper outlining various religious symbols.

Teaching the Bahá'í Faith

Much of the reading public became aware of Bahá'í principles through articles about community service activities or celebrations of Bahá'í events, but some also read about efforts by Bahá'ís to explicitly educate people about their Faith. Campaigns of teaching about the Bahá'í Faith through public meetings, distribution of literature, or participation in book fairs were reported in Belgium, Botswana, the Cook Islands, the Czech Republic, Malaysia, Northern Ireland, Poland, and Portugal. A poster campaign in the area of Hamilton, Canada, resulted in a large photograph of one participant above the headline, "Bahá'ís launch poster campaign inviting people to explore faith" in the *Spectator*. In Norway, a similar article in *Romsdals Budstikke* included a large photo of a Bahá'í holding a poster and described the teachings he was promoting.

Bahá'í Properties

"Bahá'í edifices are admired the world over for their magnificent architecture," states the quotation introducing an article in India's the *Pioneer* about the buildings which make up the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel. The article, accompanied by photographs of the Shrine of the Báb, goes on to say, "The Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa and the grave of Bahá'u'lláh, after whom the movement is named, near Akko, impress the visitor as much with the elegance and magnificence of construction as by the intense faith these evoke among the followers around the globe."

The buildings that constitute the Bahá'í World Centre were also described in newspapers in England and Belgium. Most of the other articles related to Bahá'í properties concerned Houses of Worship, seven of which exist around the world. On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the dedication of the House of Worship in Langenhain, Germany, at least eight articles were

printed. Also in Germany, a piece on the Indian Temple was carried in the architectural magazine *Stein*. An award for restoration of ornamental concrete bestowed by the Structural Engineers Association of Illinois resulted in mention of the House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois, USA, in *Skyline*. Other pieces related to Bahá'í Houses of Worship include an article in Hungary describing the Temples around the world and three articles in Panama about the House of Worship in Panama City.

Response to Attacks and Misrepresentation

Although the overwhelming majority of articles on the Bahá'í Faith conveyed a positive or impartial tone, some attacked the principles or activities of the Bahá'ís or incorrectly classified the Faith as a sect. For example, an article in Malaysia's *Berita Minggu* (2 April 1995) calls the Bahá'ís a fanatical group which must be eliminated; an article in Switzerland's *Tribune de Genève* (20 October 1994) defines the Bahá'í Faith as a sect, including it in a chart of sects in the country; and a piece in a Samoan Islands magazine called *Talamua* mentions the Bahá'í Faith in the context of a study claiming new "churches" are "a new opium for the people."

Defense of the Faith took various forms. After reports of the abovementioned study were printed in New Zealand, including the claims that the Bahá'í Faith and other religions are oppressive, paternalistic, and advocate white supremacy, an article speaking to these claims was printed in the *Wanganui Chronicle*. A Bahá'í representative was quoted as saying, "The faith has been a potent force for social change as members activate its teachings in their daily lives.... Far from being paternalistic, these teachings include the equality of men and women and the duty to educate daughters as well as sons, a radical idea in Persia at the time and still so in many areas today.... Far from being white-skinned westerners, the majority of members are people of colour." The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Botswana responded to allegations leveled against it in the *Southern Post* by writing a lengthy letter to the editor. After a series of attacks on the Bahá'í Faith in local papers of Bulgaria, one reporter wrote an article which stated, "The Bahá'ís are neither a sect, nor a cult, but a message as old as the world." An important Spanish

magazine on contemporary issues, *Epoca*, ran an article in November 1994 mentioning the Bahá'í Faith as one of several religions mistakenly viewed as sects.

General coverage

A concise description of the history, activities, and principles of the Bahá'í Faith published in the November issue of the French review *L'Actualité Religieuse dans le Monde* [World Religious News] is one example of a type of general overview carried in numerous papers and magazines throughout the world. Some general pieces were prompted by a particular event, such as the Irish Bahá'í summer school, or were printed because of significant milestones, such as the 100th anniversary of the Bahá'í Faith in North America or its 40th anniversary in Papua New Guinea. Others, such as two articles printed in Uruguay (*La Mañana*) accompanied by photographs of Bahá'í edifices, simply assumed public interest in a Faith which is still completely new to some. Articles of both kinds were printed on every continent.

Another common type of piece was the personal profile of an individual member of the Bahá'í Faith. Articles were written on prominent members of the community, such as Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm, whose visit to Thailand was reported in the *Bangkok Post* and the *Nation* and whose travels to Turkey resulted in an interview being printed in a leading paper. The visit of well-known Canadian artist Otto Donald Rogers to Macau was reported in that country, as were the visits of member of the Universal House of Justice Houshmand Fatheazam to India and traditional leader and Bahá'í Counsellor Moli Chang to Guam. Coverage continued of the book *Olya's Story*, which chronicles the religious persecution experienced by its author, Olya Roohizadegan, in Iran. The book was selected by the British magazine *Everywoman* as one of the top ten non-fiction books of the year in June 1994, and it was featured in the magazine *Marie-Claire* in November.

The *New York Times* (*Westchester Weekly*) printed a half-page story with photographs about the work of photographer Mark Sadan and his recent project capturing on film the people in Eastern Europe who had adopted the Bahá'í Faith after the

fall of communism. In New Zealand, local papers ran stories about the Bahá'í beliefs of American composer-arranger Russell Garcia and his wife, singer Gina Garcia, and about popular television actress Ilona Rodgers.

Less well-known Bahá'ís were also profiled. "A Woman for All Seasons" was the title of an article in Singapore's *Straits Times* describing the work and beliefs of linguistics expert Phyllis Chew, and "From bar mitzvah to Bahá'í" in Canada's *Toronto Star* recounted the spiritual journey which led one man to accept the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. The story of a woman from Norway who spent three weeks teaching at a children's summer camp in Siberia run by Bahá'ís was told in a Norwegian paper, and the experiences of a family who moved from the United Kingdom to the Soviet Union in 1982 and lived through the radical changes in that region were chronicled in Wales.

The reading public also became informed about Bahá'í teachings through regular columns written by Bahá'ís. Such features were carried in New Zealand ("Bahá'í Forum" in *Northland Age Courier*), Swaziland ("Bahá'í Corner" in the *Swazi News*), the Azores (*Correio dos Açores*), and Saint Martin (a weekly column in the *Chronicle*). A series of articles outlining Bahá'í beliefs was also printed in the Czech Republic.

Radio

The listening public learned about Bahá'í principles and activities through numerous radio interviews, special programs or segments on the Faith, and regular programs produced by Bahá'ís.

The radio station Europe 1 broadcast a 15-minute interview with Bahá'ís at prime time on 10 May 1994; the first two programs of Canada's new national program on religion, "Tapestry," included interviews with Bahá'ís; two one-hour interviews about an Association for Bahá'í Studies conference in Australia were aired on ABC National Radio; and in the United Kingdom, interviews with Bahá'ís were aired on BBC Radio Foyle's "Face to Faith," as part of BBC Radio 2's World Faith Week, on BBC Radio Leicester's current affairs program "Talkback," and in Northern Ireland, where the author of the

book *Olya's Story* spoke on three popular stations. Other significant interviews took place in Bulgaria, where Bahá'ís spoke with journalists from four stations on the occasion of International Women's Day; in New Zealand, where National Radio's "Faith and Works" program included conversations with Bahá'ís on at least five different occasions; in Paraguay, where seven interviews were conducted regarding the statement *The Promise of World Peace* and two two-hour conversations aired about women and development; and in Jordan, where the director of the Bahá'í International Community's Office of the Environment spoke about the World Summit for Social Development. Numerous radio interviews with Bahá'ís were aired in Zimbabwe and in Zambia, particularly on the topics of peace, the advancement of women, and literacy. Other countries broadcasting conversations with Bahá'ís on national stations included Equatorial Guinea, Finland, and Namibia.

Special programs on the Bahá'í Faith were aired in Côte d'Ivoire (a one-hour introduction on national radio), Tonga (coverage of an International Year of the Family seminar organized by Bahá'ís), Italy (a series of discussions of Bahá'í teachings), and India (talks and musical programs by Bahá'ís).

Regular programs on the Bahá'í Faith and issues related to its principles, produced by Bahá'ís, were aired in Cameroon, the Congo, the Cook Islands, Malaysia, and the West Leeward Islands. The Bahá'ís of Zaire received permission from the government for a weekly time slot on national radio, like those granted to the country's other religions, and the first program was aired in March 1995. Bahá'í-owned and operated stations continued to broadcast in the United States, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and Panama.

Television

Information about the Bahá'í Faith was broadcast on television as part of national news programs, programs on religion, and other feature programs. Bahá'í-produced videotapes were aired in their entirety in a number of countries, and regular Bahá'í-produced series were broadcast.

The celebration of Ridván held by the Bahá'í community of

Tirana, Albania, in April 1994 was mentioned on all the national news programs. On 23 May 1994, the French national station, TF1, announced the 150th anniversary of the Bahá'í Faith during the prime time news. The anniversary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, 12 November, was the occasion for an interview with a Bahá'í on national television in Mauritius and the broadcast of pictures of the Bahá'í World Centre. In Angola, Naw-Rúz 1995 (21 March) was reported on the national station. Other events warranting national news coverage were the visit of a Bahá'í delegation to the Constitution Drafting Commission of Ethiopia (the lead story); a symposium in India commemorating the 50th anniversary of the United Nations; and a walk for world peace and a seminar on the rights of women held in Pakistan.

In Romania, the essentials of the Bahá'í Faith were explained during a three-hour television program produced by a large private channel, TV 7ABC. The program was inspired by the dance performances of a group of Bahá'í youth who presented the principles of the Faith during their visit to Romania in July 1994. It included an introduction, a ten-minute clip of a Bahá'í study program, interviews with several Bahá'ís, and a panel discussion with representatives of other Faiths. In Bulgaria, a twelve-minute segment on the Bahá'í Faith, including interviews and excerpts from the Bahá'í World Congress held in 1992, was aired as part of a weekly show on religions and mysticism. The segment proved so popular that the following week, 30 more minutes of interviews and additional World Congress excerpts were broadcast. Ghana's national television program "About Life," a series dealing with fundamental existential questions, aired a 45-minute interview with two Bahá'í representatives.

Interviews with Bahá'ís and stories about their beliefs were also telecast as special features or included in current affairs programs. Mr. Mas'ud Khamsi, a former member of the International Teaching Centre, was interviewed for 20 minutes by Global Television in Peru during a conference on "The Future of Humanity." A seven-minute interview with a Bahá'í in Italy was broadcast on the country's first channel, RAI 1. A Bahá'í pioneer to Cyprus was interviewed in Greek about himself and his beliefs on the program "Studie 1" on RIK/CBC 1. In Namibia, the

popular program "After 9" carried a brief summary of a public meeting about the Bahá'í Faith attended by many prominent people. When Olya Roohizadegan, author of *Olya's Story*, visited Reno, Nevada, USA, a 70-minute program was taped for local audiences. The program later won three awards for excellence in religious broadcasting and for best talk show programming. A Bahá'í from the Basque region of Spain who attended the World Summit for Social Development was interviewed for five minutes during prime time on ETB-2. An interview conducted in Saipan with André Brugiroux, author of the book *La Terre n'est qu'un seul pays* [later published as *One People, One Planet*], was picked up by CNN and broadcast all over the world.

Bahá'í videotapes broadcast on television include *Prisoner of Akka* in the Congo, the Cook Islands, the Czech Republic, and Hungary (dubbed in Hungarian); *Bahá'u'lláh—Secret of our Century* in Equatorial Guinea; and *Approach to a Sacred Place and Anarchy into Order* in Canada. Regular Bahá'í programs continued to be shown in Canada (monthly on Vision TV) and the Cook Islands (weekly), and a new weekly slot was granted on Portuguese State Television. In India, the contract was finalized for Jain Satellite Television to telecast thirteen episodes of a program on the Bahá'í Faith.

In the context of a survey of Bahá'í youth activities during 1994–95, some of the unique qualities and challenges of youth are presented.

BAHÁ'Í YOUTH: 'A New Kind of People'

The crises affecting all of society always have a particularly devastating impact on its youngest members, who are still in the process of forming the attitudes that will guide their lives. At this turning point in history, when the forces of disintegration are accelerating and the forces of integration still too little understood, many youth feel caught in a maelstrom, unsure of how and why they should respond with hope when their experiences are so fraught with pain. In the past ten years, more children than soldiers have been killed or disabled in the wars around the world, while some five million children have been forced into refugee camps, and twelve million have been left homeless.¹ In 1995, UNICEF reported that more than half a million of Asia's children were working in sweat shops, brothels, or on the streets.² Among children between the ages of five and fourteen, murder is now reported to be the third leading cause of death in industrial

1. UNICEF, *State of the World's Children, 1995* (Oxford University Press).
2. *International Herald Tribune*, 16 December 1994.

countries.³ In the United States, nearly four million youth and children live in “distressed neighborhoods” characterized by high poverty and unemployment rates.⁴ Suicide has become the second leading cause of youthful death in that country.⁵

While many children and youth valiantly struggle not to be victims of their circumstances, too many learn the lessons of apathy and violence. A study by the US Centers for Disease Control released in 1993 showed that American teenagers were killing each other with guns at the highest rate since the government began recording such deaths 30 years earlier: an average of eleven youths between 15 and 19 were killed this way every day.⁶ A US Justice Department study released in 1995 showed that juvenile arrests for major violent crimes grew from 83,400 in 1983 to 129,600 in 1992.⁷ According to a leading educator reviewing the status of youth in 1995, practically all the indicators of youth health and behavior have declined year by year for well over a generation,⁸ and this crisis is not confined to a particular social class, ethnic group, gender, or other social grouping.⁹ In the 1990s, the time of youth has become less and less associated with innocence and optimism and too often linked with disaffection, hopelessness, and violence.

Bahá’í youth, who live all over the world and come from every social grouping, are not unaffected by this crisis. They are among those suffering in war-torn countries, poor neighborhoods, and violent cities. How does being Bahá’ís shape their responses to the current state of the world? Like many other youth who have not relinquished their responsibility for the

future, Bahá’í youth try to view the problems as challenges to be overcome. They understand from the writings of the Bahá’í Faith that calamitous events are to characterize this age but find in the same teachings a call to view these disturbances as a stimulus to action, an opportunity to create unity where disunity exists. Youth are extolled in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh as possessing a spirit of adventure and enterprise, eagerness, optimism, vigor, and vitality. They are encouraged to channel these qualities into lives of service, shining as lights of hope in an age of desperation and “rejecting the low sights of mediocrity...[to] scale the ascending heights of excellence in all they aspire to do.”¹⁰

For any number of reasons, too many modern youth remain blind to their own potential or cynical about the future. The Bahá’í Faith offers youth a charter and hope for the future, an opportunity to become “a new kind of people, people who are upright, kind, intelligent, truthful, and honest.”¹¹ In January 1984, the Universal House of Justice addressed the Bahá’í youth of the world with characteristic certitude, saying, “Undoubtedly, it is within your power to contribute significantly to shaping the societies of the coming century; youth can move the world.” The stories in the following pages recount some of the experiences of those who have taken up this challenge to demonstrate the positive power of faith, unity, and service.

Sharing the Message of Bahá’u’lláh

Conscious of the gift of understanding they have been given through the Faith, Bahá’í youth are eager to share this vision with others. The Universal House of Justice has reinforced this eagerness, urging them “to impart to their despairing fellow youth the restorative joy, the constructive hope, the radiant assurances of Bahá’u’lláh’s stupendous Revelation.”¹² Such an act, of guiding

3. William Damon, *Greater Expectations: Overcoming the Culture of Indulgence in America's Homes and Schools* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 9.

4. *Kids Count Data Book 1994*, Center for the Study of Social Policy. Available: CYFERNET.

5. Damon, p. 10.

6. *The National Update on America's Education Goals* (American Political Network, Inc., 1993). Available: MN Children Youth and Family Consortium Electronic Clearinghouse.

7. *International Herald Tribune*, 9–10 September 1995.

8. Damon, p. 7.

9. Damon, p. xiii.

10. Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 May 1985 to the Bahá’í youth of the world.

11. From a letter dated 25 August 1944 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi cited in *Unrestrained as the Wind: A Life Dedicated to Bahá’u’lláh* (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1985), pp. 23–24.

12. Universal House of Justice, letter dated 8 May 1985 to the Bahá’í youth of the world.

Youth traveling in Mongolia in 1994 to teach the Bahá'í Faith.



a sacred human heart to the Source of its illumination, requires the highest standards of purity, integrity, detachment, and sacrifice. Young people, still being relatively free of worldly attachments, are uniquely suited to arise to this challenge and carry the message throughout the world.

From June through September 1994, 24 youth from the United States, Canada, and Europe contributed to the growth of the Bahá'í communities in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. These participants in the Martha Root Project—named after a well-known Bahá'í who traveled around the world several times during the early part of this century to teach the Faith—dedicated themselves to educating people about Bahá'u'lláh, encouraging local Bahá'ís to deepen their understanding of the teachings and to appreciate the privilege of sharing these teachings with others, and nurturing the development of Local Spiritual Assemblies.

Under the guidance of the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the Baltic States, the youth conducted well-attended public meetings about the Bahá'í Faith, assisted social service organizations such as orphanages, and helped to provide needed community services. They also participated in the International Youth Unity Festival in Kraslava, Latvia, organized by the Regional Spiritual Assembly.

During the same summer, the Krasnoyarsk region of Siberia was visited by a group of youth from the United States taking part in the Marion Jack VI Project.¹³ The sixth such visit to take

13. Marion Jack was a distinguished Bahá'í teacher who settled in Bulgaria in 1930 and remained there until her death in 1954.

place since the trips began in 1990, the project matched American youth with local Bahá'ís to create small teams which taught the Bahá'í Faith in areas along the Yenisey River.

In Australia, the National Youth Committee initiated and planned the Collis Featherstone Teaching Campaign to teach the Bahá'í Faith in the name of the deceased Hand of the Cause of God from that country. At a gathering filled with beautiful music, inspiring addresses, slides, and reminiscences of Mr. Featherstone, the project was launched in Wollongong in October 1994. Then the youth, working with the Bahá'í institutions, began to tell the people of Wollongong about Bahá'u'lláh. They visited thousands of homes, distributing invitations to workshops about the Faith. They set up displays about unity and about the family. They staffed a new Bahá'í bookshop and information center at the Wollongong City Mall, sharing literature and conversation. They hosted a series of arts nights to provide opportunities for spirits to be uplifted through poetry and music.

Youth from India organized book exhibitions in Nepal, conducted public meetings in the villages of Himachal Pradesh, and visited schools and colleges in Uttar Pradesh, all as part of a youth teaching project begun in May 1994. At one village in Punjab, at least 60 people decided to join the Bahá'í community.

In Chile, musical presentations, classes for children, panel discussions, newspaper and radio interviews, and puppet shows were among the media used by the youth to inform people about Bahá'u'lláh. The group of 80 young people who spent one month together organizing and carrying out these activities gathered at the end for a four-day conference to reflect on their work and plan for the following year.

The adaptability, flexibility, and consultation skills of five Canadian youth were noted with appreciation by the National Spiritual Assembly of Greenland following their visit. Members of the Wildfire Youth Institute spent six weeks in Greenland in July and August 1994. During their visit to Nuuk, the Bahá'í Center was filled with inquiring people, and when they traveled to a settlement of 150 inhabitants near Itilloq, one-third of the residents attended a public meeting. The youth spent time encouraging and invigorating their fellow Bahá'ís, some of them

in isolated locations, and they inspired one believer to write an article for the national newspaper.

In the United States, the summer of 1994 witnessed the launch of the Army of Light Teaching Campaign. Youth teams and Bahá'í Youth Workshops (see below) formed the nucleus of this effort to bring the Bahá'í message to a wide variety of people. More than 1,000 young people took part in over 100 projects. At an Army of Light National Youth Conference held in Arizona in December 1994, the 2,000 young participants rededicated themselves to "act upon the principles which direct our inner development and private character, and which guide our active life of teaching and service," and each one signed a special scroll to be sent to the Bahá'í World Centre.

Bahá'í Youth Workshops

The power of the arts to connect hearts and to communicate concepts despite barriers of language or culture make dance, drama, and music ideal vehicles for sharing the principles and spirit of the Bahá'í Faith. This power is being harnessed by the Bahá'í youth of the world in a unique way through the Bahá'í Youth Workshop.

In 1974, a Bahá'í in Los Angeles, seeing how the intense energies, emotions, and need for camaraderie among youth were too often being channeled into negative, destructive activities, created a vehicle for focusing those energies on positive ends. Oscar DeGruy created the first Bahá'í Youth Workshop, defined as a group of youth who use contemporary dance styles, music, and drama to convey messages of universal peace, unity in diversity, and spiritual awareness.¹⁴

By the summer of 1994, there were approximately 70 Bahá'í Youth Workshops in the United States and another 30 scattered throughout the world. A National Office for Bahá'í Youth Workshops had been created in the United States to encourage

14. Although Bahá'í youth have held workshops on many topics, including the performing arts for many years, and many performing arts groups have existed, the term "Bahá'í Youth Workshop" has come to be used for the particular kind of activity described in the following pages.

and advise new groups and create a facility for sharing ideas and news. An international mailing list on the Internet had also sprung to life. The art forms used by each group—drama, dance, music, stepping—varied according to the group's strengths, but all Workshops held in common a commitment to unity, prayer, consultation, and study of the Bahá'í teachings in preparation for delivering the message of Bahá'u'lláh.

About 130 youth from 13 Youth Workshops around the mid-western United States descended on Indianapolis and other



The Atlanta Bahá'í Youth Workshop performs for the third year at the Dekalb County (Georgia) Super Summer Family Festival.

Indiana cities in August 1994 and shared their talents, enthusiasm, and beliefs with audiences at the State Fair and in public parks. In Indianapolis, the youth taped a segment of a cable television series called *Peaceworks*, impressing the initially skeptical producer and crew with their professional behavior and quality performances.

"Arise, O Army of Light" was the theme of a step dance performed by the Atlanta Bahá'í Youth Workshop at the Martin Luther King "I Have a Dream" National Youth Assembly in Little Rock, Arkansas. The performance was given at a luncheon for Coretta Scott King before an audience of 1,200. Following another performance the next day—a rap on the equality of women and men and an introduction to the Bahá'í Faith—people crowded onto the stage, wanting to know more. During the year, the Atlanta Workshop was also invited to perform at the annual conference of the National Association for the Education of Youth and Children; the second annual Festival of African American Literature and the Arts at Clemson University; and the

Children's Interfaith Service at the First Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, sponsored by the Atlanta/Fulton County Commission on Youth and Children.

A Martin Luther King Jr. holiday celebration in Oklahoma City featured a performance by Orenda, the local Bahá'í Youth Workshop. Orenda is a Seneca Indian word meaning "flame of eternal love." After one of the youth recited a prayer for humanity, the group performed three pieces for the more than 1,200 people attending the interfaith program. They received a standing ovation.

The 24 youth from various cultural backgrounds who make up Arizona's Eternal Flame Bahá'í Youth Workshop spent three weeks during the summer performing locally and in Los Angeles at community centers, youth clubs, and in shopping malls, attracting between 50 and 120 people per show. The final event of the trip was a performance at Arizona State University which incorporated singing, acting, and dancing on the themes of unity, the oneness of humankind, and the elimination of all forms of prejudice. It elicited a standing ovation.

Arizona was also treated to the performances of the Los Angeles Workshop, which visited the Native American Bahá'í Institute in Houck and the mostly Navajo communities of the surrounding area. Powerful messages about the world's need for racial harmony, equality of the sexes, and spirituality were conveyed by the 22 youth, who also shared the concept of the Bahá'í Youth Workshop with their peers at the Institute. The local youth enthusiastically studied the elements of a Workshop—such as consultation, prayer, disciplined practice, and constant focus on unity—and a month later a Workshop for the Navajo Nation and Gallup area was formed.

Upon returning to southern California, the Los Angeles Workshop spent an intense four days performing 11 times in such locations as a junior high summer school, a community teen center, a day camp, and public parks. Three school principals attended performances and invited the troupe to perform at their schools. Each of the communities organized informational meetings to answer the questions of those moved to seek greater understanding of the Bahá'í Faith.

The Washington State-based Diversity Dance Workshop traveled to Europe to spread its message of harmony. The thirteen youth volunteered to spend their summer teaching about the Bahá'í Faith full-time by performing in public squares, marketplaces and street malls, despite 100-degree heat, lack of adequate drinking water, and costumes soaked with perspiration. For six weeks, they traveled throughout Germany and Switzerland, overcoming language barriers by communicating their message through movement.

The Frankfurt performance of the Diversity Dance Workshop was part of the city's 1,200th anniversary celebration. As the dancers performed on an outdoor stage, program director Anna Powers recounts watching the crowds, their eyes fixed on the movements and their faces reflecting understanding of the message. The sound system was so strong that the quotations read could be heard by people sitting in cafés blocks away.

Reflecting on the power of the trip, one participant, Shahani Porushotma, said, "I will never forget the tears in the eyes of a young Bosnian refugee as she approached me after the Racism Dance to express her appreciation to the Workshop. She had experienced firsthand in her own war-torn country the problems we were depicting... Nor can I forget the reaction of the 200 prison inmates at a performance in Schwabisch Hall after the Dance of Betrayal (about drug abuse). I later found out that all the prisoners were there for drug offenses. I was so moved to hear the comments of one of the inmates: 'I realized through your dance that the solution to all my problems lies not in drugs, but it is a spiritual solution that I am seeking.'"

The Youth Workshop concept proved to be adaptable to a wide variety of cultures. Bahá'í Youth Workshops formed in Africa generated great enthusiasm among both performers and audiences. After one Bahá'í youth from the United States traveled to Ghana and Cameroon and shared the Workshop idea, local Bahá'ís adapted the concept to include their own dance and music traditions and to portray how Bahá'í principles apply to the issues facing their people. During performances of the Ghana Bahá'í Youth Workshop in sixteen villages, more than 130

people came to accept the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and three new Local Spiritual Assemblies were formed. The youth in Cameroon created four skits to include in their initial 36 performances in schools, universities, and public squares.

Eighteen youth from Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Tanzania joined together to form Youth in Motion, a drama and dance group aimed at expressing the message brought by Bahá'u'lláh. The group traveled for four months, performing before a total of more than 50,000 people in three countries.

The Bahá'í Youth Workshop of Yakutsk, Siberia, formed after the Vancouver (Canada) Workshop spent time in this region of Russia. The trip marked the first time any Youth Workshop had traveled to this area to teach about the Bahá'í Faith through the arts. A major performance was held for the dignitaries of the Yakutian Region, followed by a reception. The youth were also honored to be included on the program of an event held at the Russia Theater for the dignitaries of the Sakha Republic. Before the Vancouver youth returned home, they performed together with the new Yakutian Workshop that they had trained. Some months later the Yakutia youth were still performing, distributing information to other youth eager to understand the sources of their inspiration.

The Vancouver Workshop also traveled to the Cook Islands, where it received extensive media coverage. The troupe was the featured guest at the National Song Quest Finals which were attended by the Prime Minister and the Queen's Representative.

The youth at a homeless refuge in Australia were visited by the Sydney Dance Workshop, whose members performed, taught some dances, and shared their feelings about the Bahá'í Faith.



Bahá'í youth in Korea learn a dance about prayer entitled "Supplication."

Also in Australia, Bahá'í youth from Perth traveled to Onslow-North West Australia to conduct performing arts workshops for their peers. Dance and theater classes, music and rhythm sessions, and study sessions all focusing on the themes of unity and consultation were offered to twenty youth. Bahá'í youth in Tasmania formed a dance group called The Farsight which performed in high schools in several cities and at the Human Rights Day activities in Hobart.

The Ryogen-no-hi Dance Workshop of Japan undertook a proclamation tour of the western part of the country in the summer of 1994. The 30 participating youth found that their dancing created an openness which allowed them to share ideas. Some audience members wept and said the dances "spoke to their hearts." After some Bahá'í youth from Japan attended the Korean Bahá'í summer school, Bahá'í university students from both Japan and Korea united to form a group called the Ocean Waves to provide a chance for youth from various cultures to interact and express themselves through the arts.

The European Bahá'í Youth Council

Since 1989, the activities of Bahá'í youth in Europe and collaboration with other youth organizations which share their aims have been coordinated by the European Bahá'í Youth Council. A five-member body appointed annually by the Universal House of Justice, the Council initiates projects for Bahá'ís, arranges Bahá'í youth participation in events related to important Bahá'í principles, and responds to requests for representation at various youth consultations. During 1994-95, two highlights of Council activities were the "Shaping Europe" conferences and participation in the World Summit for Social Development.

From 20 to 25 July 1994, Bahá'í youth gathered in five locations across Europe to consult about the future of the continent and their own role in shaping its destiny. Sponsored by the European Bahá'í Youth Council, the conferences drew 850 participants from 20 countries to Berlin; 400 from 20 countries to Bucharest; 340 from 19 countries to St. Petersburg; 950 from 26 countries to Barcelona; and 400 from 22 countries to Wolverhampton, England. "...[W]e have rededicated ourselves to our

common movement...taking on our shoulders the high responsibility of shaping the future of Europe," reported the youth in Berlin. They further recounted that "the conference culminated in a European linkup in which we were able to share with our Eastern and Western European brothers and sisters the excitement at the prospects of this movement."

Similar expressions of excitement, dedication, and joy came from each of the conference sites. At every location, youth arose to take practical action toward the goals being discussed, some traveling from the conference to teach others about the Bahá'í Faith, some offering a year of full-time volunteer service, and some formulating personal plans for action upon their return to their home communities. Also at every gathering, new souls joined the Bahá'í community, having found truth in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

In March 1995, members of the European Bahá'í Youth Council and other Bahá'í youth were able to share their ideas with representatives of various youth organizations during the International Youth Consultation on Social Development in Copenhagen, an event the Council helped to plan. The gathering was chiefly organized by the World Assembly of Youth to take place in conjunction with the United Nations World Summit for Social Development. The European Bahá'í Youth Council served on the executive steering committee with representatives of four other organizations.

Youth from 70 countries came together to consult on issues such as "Youth—A Dynamic Force for Social Change," "The Social Responsibility of Youth," and "Reforming the United Nations." Two working groups, addressing the themes of global consciousness and the role of education in social development, were offered by the European Bahá'í Youth Council to explore concepts such as unity in diversity, world citizenship, and the spiritual dimension of human nature. Bahá'í youth also chaired two plenary sessions and contributed significantly to the Copenhagen Youth Declaration, a six-page statement drafted during the gathering and presented on behalf of the International Youth Consultation to the World Summit itself.

The European Bahá'í Youth Council's presence was also felt

at the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Forum accompanying the World Summit. Youth distributed literature and answered questions at a European Bahá'í Youth Council booth, and they participated in special Youth Caucus meetings held during the course of the Forum.

Surrounding these two high water marks of the Youth Council's year—the Shaping Europe conferences and the Summit in Copenhagen—a number of other significant events occurred, two of them in May 1994. During that month, a representative of the Youth Council, Dr. Kishan Manocha, addressed a large workshop group on the topics "What Can Youth Do to Create a New System of Values?" and "From Spirit Into Action: Implementing Agenda 21" during the International Youth Forum in Novosibirsk Akademgorodok, Siberia. The "Interweek" forum drew 250 people from 26 countries to examine the theme "The Choice of the Future: New Tasks for Individual and Collective Responsibility." The aim of the event was to draw global problems to the attention of European youth, identify strategies for their resolution, and discuss the role of future leaders in the decision-making process, particularly with regard to Russia.

That same month, in Geneva, another representative of the Youth Council, Inder Manocha, attended a meeting called "The Contribution of Youth to Lasting Peace" held under the auspices of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The gathering was the third follow-up meeting to the 1990 World Summit for Children and brought together chief executive officers of humanitarian and development NGOs to further develop the goals of that Summit. A statement prepared by the Youth Council to address the issues concluded with the following: "It is youth, from all cultures and backgrounds, who must look upon their differences as a reason for delight and upon their common humanity as the basis for discovering peace, justice, and equality. Peace is not merely the absence of war in the same way that war is not the absence of peace. It is a decision, a dynamic, and a vision. It needs youth on its side as much as youth need it."

In September 1994, the Council cooperated with the Landegg Academy in Switzerland to organize a forum called "The Creative Resolution of Conflict." The 35 people attending the

four-day event developed a statement on conflict resolution and made plans to establish an international network of youth committed to supporting the oneness of mankind. The forum was held under the auspices of the Council of Europe, the European Youth Foundation, and the Youth Parliament of Appenzell. In October, representatives of the European Bahá'í Youth Council participated in the International Young Leadership Camp organized by the youth section of the World Conference on Religion and Peace and held in Riva del Garda, Italy.

Finally, the sixth annual conference of European national and regional Bahá'í youth committees took place in Brno, Czech Republic, in February 1995. Reporting on the atmosphere created by the 80 representatives of 26 countries who attended, the Youth Council wrote, "The sheer urgency of the times and the swift action that must needs be realized by all the youth of Europe in order to achieve the mighty purpose of this stupendous Revelation were clear in the hearts and minds of all present."

Representation at Youth Events

In addition to the significant representation at youth events achieved by the European Bahá'í Youth Council, Bahá'í youth in other regions of the world cosponsored or took part in youth-related consultations organized by other groups.

Two young Bahá'ís were among the 200 delegates from 86 nations to travel to Canada for an international conference for young leaders organized by the Jeanne Sauvé Foundation. The Foundation was created by the former Governor-General of Canada to provide young people with a permanent international forum in which to discuss important issues and create a network of contacts, regardless of political, cultural, ideological, or other differences. In May 1994, the youth met in Montreal to discuss globalization and education.

The Bahá'í participants were invited to present workshops called "Family: the Cornerstone of Society" and "A New Framework for Moral Education." They set up an exhibition from which they distributed pamphlets, prayers, and books on education, development, environment, race unity, peace, and women. They also shared their personal experiences of living as Bahá'ís in

Albania, Italy, Iran, the United States, and Central America.

A young Samoan Bahá'í, Vaisualao Lauvao, was selected by the Western Samoan National Youth Council to represent his country at the fifth International Youth Forum in Seoul, Korea, in July. "Youth and the Family—All for One and One for All" was the forum theme, which Vaisualao addressed in the speech he delivered. "The youth phase is the most critical stage of our individual and collective development," he stated. "...It is the testing stage of ideas, habits, attitudes and life-styles. The time to acquire a livelihood, and to adopt those qualities which will mould our perspectives and approaches towards the issues of our age. It is essential therefore for the youth to acquire a clear and unifying vision of human society and their destiny.... In our age this vision is nothing less than the realization...of the truth that we are all members of one family, the family of the human race." In December 1994, two Samoans represented the country's Bahá'í youth at a South Pacific Methodist Youth Convention organized to challenge Pacific youth to pray, reflect, and contribute toward making a peaceful, just, and healthy world.

The reputation made by Bahá'í youth who participated in a National Youth Leadership Forum called "Don't Hate...Communicate" in New York City led to invitations for further Bahá'í involvement in Chicago and Atlanta. The forum series was begun by American Telephone and Telegraph to help young people build alliances with peers of different backgrounds who are working toward positive change. After the first weekend conference in New York, at which youth put together personal and group action plans, the organizers were so impressed with the Bahá'í participants that they accepted all Bahá'í applicants for the Chicago forum. The Chicago youth had been encouraged to apply by the youth task force of the Chicago Human Rights Commission, which was familiar with the Chicago Bahá'í Youth Workshop's diverse makeup and community efforts. This Workshop performed as part of the AT&T Forum's evening program and was so well received that when the Forum moved to Atlanta, the program coordinator invited that city's Bahá'í Youth Workshop to perform. During each city's forum, Bahá'í youth shared sacred writings about overcoming prejudice and offered

guidance on developing consultation skills. In a thank you note to the Bahá'ís, the forum coordinator wrote: "...if only the world at large could capture the love and sensitivity that seems to be instilled in the youth of the Bahá'í Faith, our problems would be far closer to being solved."

At the United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in April/May 1994, a Youth Ecofest '94 Tent was set up for the exchange of information and ideas. Two Bahá'í youth made presentations on the topic of spiritual principles and sustainable development. In August 1994, eight Bahá'í youth took part in an international youth forum in Singapore planned in cooperation with UNESCO to prepare for the tenth anniversary of the United Nations International Year of Youth in 1995.

The Bahá'í Youth Movement of Costa Rica worked with representatives of UNICEF and the Children of the Earth to organize a conference called "Youth and the United Nations—A Vital Connection," in June 1994. The event was one of a series of gatherings held around the world in preparation for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. About 35 youth from Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Nicaragua attended workshops, dramatic presentations, and video showings on consultation, moral leadership, the United Nations, and the rights of children. The conference, which took place at the Charles Wolcott Youth Institute in Santa Ana, Costa Rica, helped establish bonds between youth from different parts of Central America.

Community Service

"Aside from teaching the Cause, the greatest service the Bahá'í Youth can render is to exemplify in their lives the teachings and especially to be promoters—within the Bahá'í communities and in the world at large—of love and harmony, qualities so sadly lacking in these days of hatred, suspicion, vindictiveness and prejudice."¹⁵ As mentioned above, a number of Bahá'í youth

15. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Louhelen School, Youth Session, 15 October 1944, cited in "Youth," *Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2 (Mona Vale: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991), p. 432.



*The 1994
graduating class
of the Maxwell
International
Bahá'í School in
Vancouver,
British Columbia,
Canada.*

made efforts to carry out this duty by serving as representatives at youth gatherings and sharing Bahá'í ideals. Other attempts to be champions of unity took a variety of forms.

A reputation for being promoters of racial harmony is being earned by students at the Maxwell International Bahá'í School in Shawnigan Lake, British Columbia, Canada. When the nearby Native Heritage and Friendship Centers organized a drama group to perform interactive skits about racism in area schools to stimulate discussion, eight Maxwell students were the only non-Native youth invited to help. Maxwell School is known for its Bahá'í Youth Workshop which uses dance and drama to promote race unity.

The elimination of prejudice was one of the topics addressed by youth during a summer school in El Salvador focused on "Shaping a Model of a New Society." Bahá'í youth served as panelists, speakers, and seminar chairpersons throughout the program for the school. Approximately 350 people attended. Following the "Shaping Europe" conferences organized by the European Bahá'í Youth Council in the summer of 1994, a group of youth in Portugal put together a series of gatherings for their peers to discuss social issues. The positive response generated radio and newspaper coverage of the events. Bahá'í youth in the West Leeward Islands spoke about topics such as unity and purity during a regular five-minute radio program called "Youth Speak Out." The radio station offered the program to the Bahá'ís free of charge as it is considered a public service broadcast.

In Korea, the Peace Club formed by Bahá'ís at the Taejon National University of Technology in 1992 continued promoting the ideals of world peace, cultural understanding, and global thinking. The Club sponsored weekly presentations and discussions, invited guest speakers, presented speeches to other clubs, and organized cultural tours to Japan to establish bonds with fellow students. In December 1994, seven Peace Club members visited the Kyushu Institute of Technology in Japan and participated in a workshop led by Kyushu Professor Judith Johnson. Bahá'í writings on peace were studied and discussed.

Many youth devoted a year or more to full-time community service, responding to a recommendation made by the Universal House of Justice in a letter to the Bahá'í youth of the world dated 3 January 1984. Since that time, the "Youth Year of Service" concept has inspired youth to undertake a range of services as full-time volunteers. Some teach the Bahá'í Faith, others work in development projects such as hospitals or schools, and others volunteer at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel. Such experiences help youth to internalize the idea that the life of a Bahá'í is a life of service to humanity.

Education for Service

"...O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and to grasp the secrets of

Young Bahá'ís from Mbale and Kabale, Uganda, embark on a one-week trip to share their Faith with neighbors throughout the district.



the Day of God," counselled 'Abdu'l-Bahá.¹⁶ His successor, Shoghi Effendi, likewise urged youth to develop equally both their intellectual and spiritual capacities, with the aim of preparing themselves to apply Bahá'í teachings to the needs of society.

To this end, a variety of educational settings are used to foster ever-increasing levels of understanding among youth. At special camps, institutes, schools, and retreats organized for, and sometimes by, youth, such understanding of the Bahá'í Faith is approached intellectually through serious study of its writings, spiritually through prayer and meditation, and socially through the practice of consultation, service, and fellowship.

During 1994–95, youth camps were particularly popular in a variety of locations. The youth in the greater Auckland region of New Zealand helped to prepare sessions for presentation to their peers during the Bahá'í Regional Youth Camp in Hunua, Papakura, in June 1994. The camp came about through the cooperation of five Local Spiritual Assemblies. In Botswana, the community's desire to bring Bahá'í youth together as one spiritual family to demonstrate cooperation and love resulted in the country's first youth camp. For one week, youth gathered at the Bahá'í Institute in Mahalapye and studied the life of Bahá'u'lláh, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, chastity and marriage, and the immortality of the soul. In a report from the participants, the youth related their recognition that "they have a special role in the social and administrative activities of the Faith and that they are the carriers of the lamp which can illumine the people...."

Weekend youth camps became a regular feature of life in Venezuela, where, as of August 1994, a series in La Guajira had involved nearly 400 participants. During the camps, youth learn songs, memorize prayers and quotations, and study Bahá'í writings. Youth camps also became regular in regions of Malaysia. The fourth Sabah Bahá'í Youth Camp took place in June 1994

16. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, from a tablet translated from the Persian, cited in "Youth," *Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 415.

with 50 participants, and another camp was organized in Port Dickson in August with the theme "Youth—A Time for Service."

Youth institutes—opportunities for intensive study of the Bahá'í Faith ranging from one day to several weeks—also attracted eager participation. Members of the National Spiritual Assembly of South Africa and members of the Auxiliary Board for that region joined Bahá'í youth for a five-day institute during the summer of 1994. The program was developed through consultation among participants, and each evening topics that had been studied during the day were shared through music, song, and drama. In nearby Zambia, thirteen youth from Burundi, Rwanda, and Zambia completed a four-week course held at the William Masethla Bahá'í Institute. Fired with enthusiasm to share the teachings they had studied, five of the youth volunteered to undertake a 45-day teaching trip in Zaire, traveling by bicycle. Several weekend youth institutes also took place in the Seychelles during the year.

The spirit that animated the nine-day Ndoma Institute for Youth in the Solomon Islands was beyond description, related the organizers, who saw youth deeply engrossed in in-depth presentations on the unfoldment of the Bahá'í Faith, witnessed the presenters become energized by the enthusiasm of the 50 students, and experienced the potential of love and unity as they took part in an event that truly linked the hearts of indigenous believers and foreign pioneers. One of the highlights of the institute was a public meeting held to proclaim the Bahá'í Faith; after devotional readings and a main talk, the youth provided entertainment for the 200 guests.

In addition to camps and institutes, other educational structures were found to be successful. The Bahá'í youth of Mongolia gave talks with confidence and love for the Faith and consulted together with maturity during the first National Youth School held in that country in June. In Alaska, the fourth ALCAN Youth Training Program brought together youth from Alaska and Canada for two weeks of training and one week of service to the community.

Although many Bahá'í youth educational gatherings are open to other interested youth, some are explicitly aimed at serving the

needs of the wider youth population. The Youth Development Institute at Chandigarh, India, for example, which was created by Bahá'ís in 1991, continued to assist both Bahá'í and other youth to prepare for their futures. The institute exists to encourage youth to develop virtues such as confidence, tolerance, and patience, to provide opportunities for young people to serve the community, and to counsel youth in career planning. During 1994, a library was established for the area, many students who had dropped out of school were assisted with continuing their education, career guidance was given, and Bahá'í youth conducted classes for younger children

Youth Conferences

One particular form of education that has become a regular feature in the lives of many Bahá'í youth is the conference. Youth conferences—national, regional and international—provide opportunities for education, inspiration, exchange, and socializing. Increasingly youth themselves have taken the lead in planning and conducting such gatherings.

Among the many national youth conferences that took place during 1994–95 were two in Chile which demonstrated the initiative being taken by the young Bahá'ís of that country. At the first conference, held in August 1994 in Talca, all talks and workshops were prepared and presented by youth to give them opportunities to develop their skills. The conference focused on evaluating the past year's projects and planning for the future. The second national conference, in February 1995, was the culmination of a month-long teaching project undertaken by the youth in sixteen cities of Chile (see p. 171).

"At this time of trouble and confusion, who can offer a greater demonstration than the Bahá'í youth of the power of righteous living to restore hope to the hopeless and confidence to the fearful among their disillusioned peers?" Such was the challenge put before the 2,000 participants attending the United States' national youth conference in a message from the Universal House of Justice to the gathering. Each of the four days spent in Phoenix, Arizona, focused on one of the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith, further preparing the youth to continue teaching in

the “Army of Light” projects around the country.

The national youth conference in Colombia in July focused on “The Family: Organic Base of a Healthy World.” The conference also launched a nationwide two-year tour of the Bahá’í Afro-Cuban musical group Millero Congo. New Zealand’s annual national youth conference, held in Silverstream, Upper Hutt, in August, generated a spirit of fellowship, love, and service that contributed to the declarations of faith by two participants. National youth conferences were also held in July 1994 in Sri Lanka, at the Bahá’í Teaching Institute, Kadugannawa, and in February 1995 in Uruguay, where youth studied “World Crisis and the Role of Bahá’ís.” Many of the Malaysian youth attending a conference in Kuala Lumpur in February 1995, organized by the National Youth Committee, arose to pledge periods of service ranging from one month to one year.

An historic youth conference occurred in the Eastern Caroline Islands in December 1994. For the first time, second generation Bahá’ís from indigenous groups made up the majority of the participants, coming from the islands of Kosrae, Chuuk, and Pohnpei. For one week, the youth focused their attention on prayer, methods of studying the sacred writings, and the life of Bahá’u’lláh and memorized passages and history to prepare for presenting the Faith. In the evenings they developed artistic performances for upcoming events.

In Costa Rica, the Bahá’ís of Villa Palacio spent fifteen days clearing away an old structure that had served as a Bahá’í Center and building a pavilion twice its size in preparation for a youth conference. Visitors were welcomed by a traditional Guaymí chanter and musician who led singing and dancing. During the conference, the youth presented dramatic portrayals of early believers in the Faith such as Lua Getsinger and Howard Colby Ives, and they acted out skits to demonstrate the differences between problem-solving with and without consultation.

In the African nations of Zaire, Ethiopia, and Liberia, Bahá’í youth held conferences to prepare themselves for contributing to positive change in their countries. In Zaire, 112 young Bahá’ís gathered in August at a farm outside of Lubumbashi to explore how youth can contribute to spiritualizing and changing the

world. They studied Bahá’í teachings on morality and each evening gathered around a fire with interested friends to discuss what they had learned and answer questions. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, youth attended a training conference to prepare for resettling to different regions of the country to take the Bahá’í teachings there. In Liberia, approximately 75 young men and women rose above difficult circumstances to gather for a three-day national youth conference consisting of discussion, prayers, lectures, songs, and games.

Regional youth conferences took place in Latin America, Asia, Europe, and Australasia. The Latin American Bahá’í Youth Conference, held in Brazil in July, drew 200 participants from fourteen nations and included a walk for biodiversity through the central park of Brasilia. The Association of South East Asian Nations Bahá’í Youth Conference attracted almost 250 youth from Australia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The October



Young people from Gardner'sville, Monrovia, and Paynesville, Liberia, attending the first National Youth Conference held in Liberia, 9–11 September 1994.

gathering in Thailand revolved around the theme “Unique Challenges and Opportunities.” In Europe, simultaneous conferences on the theme of “Shaping Europe” were organized in England, Germany, Romania, Russia, and Spain by the European Bahá’í Youth Council (see pp. 177–178). The first regional youth conference to be held in the Mariana Islands—conceived, planned, and carried out by the Marianas National Youth Committee—attracted young Bahá’ís from the Eastern Caroline Islands, the Western Caroline Islands, Australia, and Guam.

Bahá’í youth from the Dominican Republic reported a

particular sense of triumph when they were allowed to attend Haiti's international youth conference, crossing a border that is often closed because of political and economic considerations. The youth studied and consulted together and overcame language barriers through music and dance and "by so many gestures from the heart."

Conclusion

"Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth and the heyday of his life will arise to serve the Cause of the Lord of the beginning and of the end, and adorn his heart with His love," wrote Bahá'u'lláh.¹⁷ Bahá'í youth in 1995, assailed by the same turbulent forces of change affecting all humanity at this critical hour, found their refuge in this assurance. As they faced the daily struggle all people face to understand their place in the world and to manifest the potential within them, they discovered strength, guidance, and vision in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. To the extent that they acted upon this precious discovery, they found themselves truly blessed.



Youth in costume to perform a Thai dance at a holy day celebration in Chiangmai, Thailand.

ESSAYS, STATEMENTS, AND PROFILES

17. From a tablet translated from the Persian, cited in "Youth," *Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 415.



The Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel

Douglas Martin considers the Revelation of the Báb in the context of its impact on Western writers of the period and its subsequent influence.

THE MISSION OF THE BÁB: Retrospective, 1844–1994

The year 1994 marked the 150th anniversary of the declaration of His mission by the Báb (Siyyid ‘Alí-Muḥammad, 1819–1850), one of the two Founders of the Bahá’í Faith. The moment invites an attempt to gain an overview of the extraordinary historical consequences that have flowed from an event little noticed at the time outside the confines of the remote and decadent society within which it occurred.

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of messianic expectation in the Islamic world, as was the case in many parts of Christendom. In Persia a wave of millennialist enthusiasm had swept many in the religiously educated class of Shi’ih Muslim society, focused on belief that the fulfillment of prophecies in the Qur’án and the Islamic traditions was at hand. It was to one such ardent seeker¹ that, on the night of 22–23 May 1844, the Báb

1. Mullá Ḥusayn-i-Bushrú’i.

Author’s note: I am indebted to Dr. Muḥammad Afnan and Ms. Elizabeth Martin for advice and assistance in the preparation of this article.

(a title meaning "Gate") announced that He was the Bearer of a Divine Revelation destined not only to transform Islam but to set a new direction for the spiritual life of humankind.

During the decade that followed, mounting opposition from both clergy and state brought about the martyrdom of the Báb, the massacre of His leading disciples and of several thousands of His followers, and the virtual extinction of the religious system that He had founded. Out of these harrowing years, however, emerged a successor movement, the Bahá'í Faith, that has since spread throughout the planet and established its claim to represent a new and independent world religion.

It is to Bahá'u'lláh (Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí, 1817–1892), that the worldwide Bahá'í community looks as the source of its spiritual and social teachings, the authority for the laws and institutions that shape its life, and the vision of unity that has today made it one of the most geographically widespread and ethnically diverse of organized bodies of people on the planet. It is from Bahá'u'lláh that the Faith derives its name and toward Whose resting place in the Holy Land that the millions of Bahá'ís around the world daily direct their thoughts when they turn to God in prayer.

These circumstances in no way diminish, however, the fact that the new Faith was born amid the bloody and terrible magnificence surrounding the Báb's brief mission, nor that the inspiration for its worldwide spread has been the spirit of self-sacrifice that Bahá'ís find in His life and the lives of the heroic band that followed Him. Prayers revealed by the Báb and passages from His voluminous writings are part of the devotional life of Bahá'ís everywhere. The events of His mission are commemorated as annual holy days in tens of thousands of local Bahá'í communities.² On the slopes of Mount Carmel, the golden-domed Shrine where His mortal remains are buried dominates the great complex of monumental buildings and gardens constituting the administrative center of the Faith's international activities.

In contemporary public awareness of the Bahá'í community and its activities, however, the life and person of Bahá'u'lláh

2. The anniversary of the birth of the Báb is commemorated 20 October; His declaration, 23 May; and His martyrdom, 9 July.



Pilgrims approaching the Shrine on Mount Carmel where the remains of the Báb, secretly carried out of Persia following His execution in 1850, were interred by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1909.

have largely overshadowed those of the Báb. In a sense, it is natural that this should be the case, given the primary role of Bahá'u'lláh as the fulfillment of the Báb's promises and the Architect of the Faith's achievements. To some extent, however, this circumstance also reflects the painfully slow emergence of the new religion from obscurity onto the stage of history. In a perceptive comment on the subject, the British historian Arnold Toynbee compared the level of appreciation of the Bahá'í Faith in most Western lands with the similarly limited impression that the mission of Jesus Christ had succeeded in making on the educated class in the Roman Empire some 300 years after His death.³ Since most of the public activity of the Bahá'í community over the past several decades has focused on the demanding task of presenting Bahá'u'lláh's message, and elaborating the implications of its social teachings for the life of society, the Faith's nineteenth-century Persian origins have tended to become temporarily eclipsed in the public mind.

Indeed, Bahá'ís, too, are challenged by the implications of the extraordinary idea that our age has witnessed the appearance of two almost contemporaneous Messengers of God. Bahá'u'lláh describes the phenomenon as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the new religion and as a mystery central to the plan of God for the unification of humankind and the establishment of a global civilization.⁴

3. Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vol. 8 (London: Oxford, 1954), p. 117.

4. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters*, 2d rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), pp. 123–124.

Fundamental to the Bahá'í conception of the evolution of civilization is an analogy to be found in the writings of both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. It draws a parallel between the process by which the human race has gradually been civilized and that whereby each one of its individual members passes through the successive stages of infancy, childhood, and adolescence to adulthood. The idea throws a measure of light on the relationship which Bahá'ís see between the missions of the two Founders of their religion.

Both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh—the former implicitly and the latter explicitly—describe the human race as standing now on the brink of its collective maturity. Apart from the Báb's role as a Messenger of God, His advent marks the fruition of the process of the refining of human nature which thousands of years of Divine revelation have cultivated. It can be viewed, in that sense, as the gateway through which humankind must pass as it takes up the responsibilities of maturity. Its brevity itself seems symbolic of the relative suddenness of the transition.⁵

At the individual level, no sooner does one cross the critical threshold of maturity in his or her development than the challenges and opportunities of adulthood beckon. The emerging potentialities of human life must now find expression through the long years of responsibility and achievement: they must become actualized through marriage, a profession and family, and service to society. In the collective life of humanity, it is the mission of Bahá'u'lláh, the universal Messenger of God anticipated in the scriptures of all the world's religions, to seize up our age's emerging consciousness of universal brotherhood and to generate the unity of thought and of collective action that will be the distinguishing characteristic of the maturity of the race. This alone can lay the foundations of global civilization.

Even as late as the end of the nineteenth century, however, it was the Báb who figured as the central Personality of the new

5. I owe this interesting suggestion to Dr. Hossain Danesh.

religion among most of those Westerners who had become aware of its existence. Writing in the American periodical *Forum* in 1925, the French literary critic Jules Bois remembered the extraordinary impact which the story of the Báb continued to have on educated opinion in Europe as the nineteenth century closed:

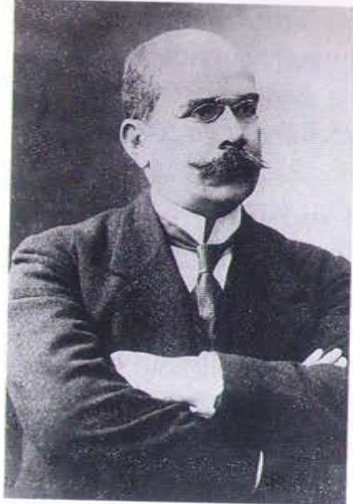
All Europe was stirred to pity and indignation.... Among the litterateurs of my generation, in the Paris of 1890, the martyrdom of the Báb was still as fresh a topic as had been the first news of His death [in 1850]. We wrote poems about Him. Sarah Bernhardt entreated Catulle Mendès for a play on the theme of this historic tragedy.⁶

Writers as diverse as Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, Edward Granville Browne, Ernest Renan, Aleksandr Tumanskiy, A.L.M. Nicolas, Viktor Rosen, Clément Huart, George Curzon, Matthew Arnold, and Leo Tolstoy were affected by the spiritual drama that had unfolded in Persia during the middle years of the nineteenth century. Not until the early part of our own century did the name the "Bahá'í Cause," which the new religion had already adopted for itself as early as the 1860s, replace the designation of "Bábí movement" in general usage in the West.⁷

That this should have been the case was no doubt a reflection of the degree to which the brief but incandescent life of the Báb seemed to catch up and embody cultural ideals that had dominated European thought during the first half of the nineteenth century, and which exercised a powerful influence on the Western imagination for many decades thereafter. The concept commonly used to describe the course of Europe's cultural and intellectual development during the first five or six decades of

6. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (1944; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 56 and *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 9, 1940–1944 (1945; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981), p. 588.

7. Persistent use of the term "Bábí" in Iranian Muslim attacks on the Bahá'í Faith over the years has tended to be a reflection of the spirit of animosity incited by its original nineteenth-century clerical opponents.



French scholar A.L.M. Nicolas,
authority on the Bábí movement

the nineteenth century is Romanticism. By the century's beginning, European thought had begun to look beyond its preoccupation with the arid rationalism and mechanistic certainties of the Enlightenment toward an exploration of other dimensions of existence: the aesthetic, the emotional, the intuitive, the mystical, the "natural," the "irrational." Literature, philosophy, history, music, and art all responded strongly and gradually exerted a sympathetic influence on the popular mind.

In England, where the tendency was already gathering force as the century opened, one effect was to produce perhaps the most spectacular outpouring of lyrical poetry that the language has ever known. Over the next two to three decades these early insights were to find powerful echoes throughout Western Europe.

A new order of things, a whole new world, lay within reach, if man would only dare what was needed. Liberated by the intellectual upheaval of the preceding decades, poets, artists and musicians conceived of themselves as the voice of immense creative capacities latent in human consciousness and seeking expression; as "prophets" shaping a new conception of human nature and human society. With the validity of traditional religion now shrouded in doubt, mythical figures and events from the classical



Cambridge scholar E.G. Browne,
attired in Persian dress

past were summoned up to serve as vehicles for this heroic Ideal:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than Death or Night;
To defy Power which seems Omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates...
This alone is Life, Joy, Empire and Victory.⁸

The same longings had awakened in America in the decades immediately preceding the Civil War and were to leave an indelible imprint on public consciousness. All of the transcendentalists became deeply attracted by the mystical literature of the Orient: the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana, and the Upanishads, as well as the works of the major Islamic poets, Rumi, Hafez, and Sa'adi. The effect can be appreciated in such influential writings of Emerson as the Divinity School Address:

I look for the hour when that supreme Beauty which ravished the souls of those eastern Men, and chiefly those of the Hebrews, and through their lips spoke oracles to all time, shall speak in the West also... I look for the new Teacher that shall follow so far those shining laws that He shall see them come full circle;... shall see the world to be the mirror of the soul; shall see the identity of the law of gravitation with purity of heart; and shall show... that Duty is one thing with Science, with Beauty, and with Joy.⁹

As the century advanced, the early Romantic optimism found itself increasingly mired in the successive disappointments and defeats of the revolutionary fervor it had helped arouse. Under the pressure of scientific and technological change, the culture of philosophical materialism to which enlightenment speculation had originally given rise gradually consolidated itself. The wars

8. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, bk. 4, ll. 569-578.
9. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Divinity School Address," *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson*, S.E. Wricher, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), pp. 115-116.

and revolutionary upheavals of the middle years of the century contributed further to a mood of "realism," a recognition that great ideals must somehow be reconciled with the obdurate circumstances of human nature.

Even in the relatively sober atmosphere of Victorian public discourse, however, Romantic yearnings retained a potent influence in Western consciousness. They produced a susceptibility to spiritual impulses which, while different from that which had characterized the opening decades of the century, now affected a broad public. If the revolutionary figure of Prometheus no longer spoke to English perceptions of the age, the Arthurian legend caught up the popular hope, blending youthful idealism with the insights of maturity, and capturing the imagination of millions precisely on that account:

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.¹⁰

It is hardly surprising that, on minds formed in this cultural milieu, the figure of the Báb should exert a compelling fascination, as Westerners became acquainted with His story in the latter years of the century. Particularly appealing was the purity of His life, an unshadowed nobility of character that had won the hearts of many among His fellow countrymen who had come as doubters or even enemies and stayed to lay down their lives in His cause. Words which the Báb addressed to the first group of His disciples suggest the nature of the moral standards He held up as goals for those who responded to His call:

Purge your hearts of worldly desires, and let angelic virtues be your adorning.... The days when idle worship was deemed sufficient are ended. The time is come when naught but the purest motive, supported by deeds of stainless purity, can ascend to the throne of the Most High and be acceptable unto Him.... Beseech the Lord your God to grant that no earthly entanglements, no worldly affections, no ephemeral pursuits,

10. Alfred Lord Tennyson, *Idylls of the King: The Passing of Arthur*, ll. 408–410.

may tarnish the purity, or embitter the sweetness, of that grace which flows through you.¹¹

Purity of heart was coupled with a courage and willingness for self-sacrifice that Western observers found deeply inspiring. The commentaries of Ernest Renan and others drew the inescapable parallel with the life of Jesus Christ. As the extraordinary drama of His final moments convincingly demonstrated,¹² the Báb could have at any moment saved Himself and achieved mastery over those who persecuted Him by taking advantage of the folly of His adversaries and the superstition of the general populace. He scorned to do so, and accepted death at the hands of His enemies only when satisfied that His mission had been completed in

11. Muḥammad-i-Zarandí (Nabíl-i-A'zam), *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, translated from the Persian by Shoghi Effendi (1932; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 93.

12. The Báb, together with a young follower, was suspended by ropes from a courtyard wall in the citadel in Tabriz, and an Armenian Christian regiment, whose commander had expressed great uneasiness about the assignment, was ordered to open fire on the prisoners. When the smoke from the 750 rifles had cleared, near pandemonium broke out among the crowd of spectators thronging roofs and walls. The Báb's companion was standing uninjured at the foot of the wall, and the Báb Himself had disappeared from view. The entire volley had done no more than sever the ropes. The Báb had returned to the room in which He had been held, in order to complete instructions to His amanuensis, which had been interrupted by His jailers.

The Armenian regiment immediately left the citadel, refusing any further participation. It would have taken only a gesture of encouragement from the Báb for the crowd, now in a state of intense excitement aroused by what they regarded as "a miracle," to have delivered Him from His captors. When He did not take advantage of this opening, the authorities eventually recovered their composure and summoned a regiment of Muslim soldiers who carried out the planned execution.

Though dramatic, the incident was not an isolated event in the Báb's ministry. Four years earlier, the wealthy and powerful Governor of Iṣfáhán, Manúchir Khán, who was the Báb's host and warm admirer, had offered to march on the capital with his army and induce Persia's feeble ruler, Muḥammad Sháh, to meet the Báb and listen to His message. The offer was courteously declined, and Manúchir Khán's subsequent death led directly to the Báb's arrest, imprisonment, and execution.

The barracks square in Tabriz, Persia, where the Báb was executed on 9 July 1850.



its entirety and in conformity with the Will of God. His followers, who had divested themselves of all earthly attachments and advantages, were barbarously massacred by adversaries who had sworn on the Qur'án to spare their lives and their honor, and who shamefully abused their wives and children after their deaths. Renan writes:

Des milliers de martyrs sont accourus pour lui avec l'allégresse au devant de la mort. Un jour sans pareil peut-être dans l'histoire du monde fut celui de la grande boucherie qui se fit des Bábís, à Téhéran. "On vit ce jour-là dans les rues et les bazars de Téhéran," dit un narrateur qui a tout su d'original, "un spectacle que la population semble devoir n'oublier jamais.... Enfants et femmes s'avançaient en chantant un verset qui dit: En vérité nous venons de Dieu et nous retournons à Lui."¹³

13. Ernest Renan, *Les Apôtres*, translated from the French by William G. Hutchison (London: Watts & Co., 1905), p. 134. "For his sake, thousands of martyrs flocked to their death. A day unparalleled perhaps in the world's history was that of the great massacre of the Bábís at Teheran. 'On that day was to be seen in the streets and bazaars of Teheran,' says a narrator, who has first-hand knowledge, 'a spectacle which it does not seem that the populations can ever forget.... Women and children advanced, singing a verse, which says: "In truth we come from God, and unto him we return."'" The narrator referred to is J.A. de Gobineau, 3d ed., *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1900), p. 304 et seq.

Purity of heart and moral courage were matched by an idealism with which most Western observers could also readily identify. By the nineteenth century, the Persia to which the Báb addressed Himself and which had once been one of the world's great civilizations, had sunk to an object of despair and contempt among foreign visitors. A population ignorant, apathetic, and superstitious in the extreme was the prey of a profoundly corrupt Muslim clergy and the brutal regime of the Qájár shahs. Shí'ih Islam had, for the most part, degenerated into a mass of superstitions and mindless legalisms. Security of life and property depended entirely on the whims of those in authority.

Such was the society that the Báb summoned to reflection and self-discipline. A new age had dawned; God demanded purity of heart rather than religious formulae, an inner condition that must be matched by cleanliness in all aspects of daily life; truth was a goal to be won not by blind imitation but by personal effort, prayer, meditation, and detachment from the appetites. The nature of the accounts which Western writers like Gobineau, Browne, and Nicolas were later to hear from surviving followers of the Báb can be appreciated from the words in which Mullá Ḥusayn-i-Buṣhrú'í described the effect on him of his first meeting with the Báb:



Artist's depiction of the peasant girl Zaynab, who disguised herself as a boy to join in the defense of the Bábí community in Zanjan and died in the siege.

I felt possessed of such courage and power that were the world, all its peoples and its potentates, to rise against me, I would, alone and undaunted, withstand their onslaught. The universe seemed but a handful of dust in my grasp. I seemed to be the Voice of Gabriel personified, calling unto all mankind: "Awake, for, lo! the morning Light has broken."¹⁴

14. *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 65.

European observers, visiting the country long after the Báb's martyrdom, were struck by the moral distinction achieved by Persia's Bahá'í community. Explaining to Western readers the success of Bahá'í teaching activities among the Persian population, in contrast to the ineffectual efforts of Christian missionaries, E.G. Browne said:

To the Western observer, however, it is the complete sincerity of the Bábis [sic], their fearless disregard of death and torture undergone for the sake of their religion, their certain conviction as to the truth of their faith, their generally admirable conduct towards mankind and especially towards their fellow-believers, which constitutes their strongest claim on his attention.¹⁵

The figure of the Báb appealed strongly also to aesthetic sensibilities which Romanticism had awakened. Apart from those of His countrymen whose positions were threatened by His mission, surviving accounts by all who met Him agree in their description of the extraordinary beauty of His person and of His physical movements. His voice, particularly when chanting the tablets and prayers He revealed, possessed a sweetness that captivated the heart. Even His clothing and the furnishings of His simple house were marked by a degree of refinement that seemed to reflect the inner spiritual beauty that so powerfully attracted His visitors.

Particular reference must be made to the originality of the Báb's thought and the manner in which He chose to express it. Throughout all the vicissitudes of the nineteenth century, the European mind had continued to cling to the ideal of the 'man of destiny' who, through the sheer creative force of his untrammelled genius, could set a new course in human affairs. At the beginning of the century, Napoleon Bonaparte had seemed to represent such a phenomenon, and not even the disillusionment that had followed his betrayal of the ideal had discouraged the powerful current of individualism that was one of the Romantic



Green silk robe worn by the Báb

15. E.G. Browne, introduction to Myron H. Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York; London: G.P. Putnam's Sons: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912), p. xvi.

movement's principal legacies to the century and, indeed, to our own.

Out of the Báb's writings emerges a sweeping new approach to religious truth. Its sheer boldness was one of the principal reasons for the violence of the opposition that His work aroused among the obscurantist Muslim clergy who dominated all serious discourse in nineteenth-century Persia. These challenging concepts were matched by the highly innovative character of the language in which they were communicated.

In its literary form, Arabic possesses an almost hypnotic beauty—a beauty which, in the language of the Qur'án, attains levels of the sublime which Muslims of all ages have regarded as beyond imitation by mortal man. For all Muslims, regardless of their sect, culture, or nation, Arabic is the language of Revelation par excellence. The proof of the Divine origin of the Qur'án lay not chiefly in its character as literature, but in the power its verses possessed to change human behavior and attitudes. Although, like Jesus and Muḥammad before Him, the Báb had little formal schooling, He used both Arabic and His native Persian, alternately, as the themes of His discourse required.

To His hearers, the most dramatic sign of the Báb's spiritual authority was that, for the first time in more than twelve centuries, human ears were privileged to hear again the inimitable accents of Revelation. Indeed, in one important respect, the Qur'án was far surpassed. Tablets, meditations, and prayers of thrilling power flowed effortlessly from the lips of the Báb. In one extraordinary period of two days, His writings exceeded in quantity the entire text of the Qur'án, which represented the fruit of 23 years of Muḥammad's prophetic output. No one among His ecclesiastical opponents ventured to take up His public challenge: "Verily We have made the revelation of verses to be a testimony for Our message to you." [i.e., In the Qur'án God had explicitly established the "miracle" of the Book's power as His sole proof.] "Can ye produce a single letter to match these verses? Bring forth, then, your proofs..."¹⁶

Moreover, despite His ability to use traditional Arabic forms

when He chose to do so, the Báb showed no hesitancy in abandoning these conventions as the requirements of His message dictated. He resorted freely to neologisms, new grammatical constructions, and other variants on accepted speech whenever He found existing terms inadequate vehicles for the revolutionary new conception of spiritual reality He vigorously advanced. Rebuked by learned Shí'ih mujtahids at His trial in Tabríz (1848) for violations of the rules of grammar, the Báb reminded those who followed Him that the Word of God is the Creator of language as of all other things, shaping it according to His purpose.¹⁷ Through the power of His Word, God says "BE," and it is.

The principle is as old as prophetic religion;—is indeed, central to it:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made....

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.¹⁸

The implications for humanity's response to the Messenger of God at His advent is touched on in a passage of one of Bahá'u'lláh's major works, *The Four Valleys*. Quoting the Persian poet Rumi, He says:

The story is told of a mystic knower, who went on a journey with a learned grammarian as his companion. They came to the shore of the Sea of Grandeur. The knower straightway flung himself into the waves, but the grammarian stood lost in his reasonings, which were as words that are written on water. The knower called out to him, "Why dost thou not follow?" The grammarian answered, "O Brother, I dare not advance. I must needs go back again." Then the knower cried, "Forget what thou didst read in the books of [rhetoric and grammar], and cross the water."

16. The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1976), p. 43.

17. *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 321–322.

18. John 1:1–10, Authorized (King James) Version.

The death of self is needed here, not rhetoric:
Be nothing, then, and walk upon the waves.¹⁹

For the young seminarians who most eagerly responded to Him, the originality of the Báb's language, far from creating an obstacle to their appreciation of His message, itself represented another compelling sign of the Divine mission He claimed. It challenged them to break out of familiar patterns of perception, to stretch their intellectual faculties, to discover in this new Revelation a true freedom of the spirit.

However baffling some of the Báb's writings were to prove for His later European admirers, the latter also perceived Him to be a unique figure, one who had found within His own soul the vision of a transcendent new reality and who had acted unhesitatingly on the imperative it represented. Most of their commentaries tended to reflect the Victorian era's dualistic frame of mind and were presented as scientifically motivated observations of what their authors considered to be an important religious and cultural phenomenon. In the introduction to his translation of *A Traveller's Narrative*, for example, the Cambridge scholar Edward Granville Browne took pains to justify the unusual degree of attention he had devoted to the Bábí movement in his research work:

...here he [the student of religion] may contemplate such personalities as by lapse of time pass into heroes and demi-gods still unobscured by myth and fable; he may examine by the light of concurrent and independent testimony one of those strange outbursts of enthusiasm, faith, fervent devotion, and indomitable heroism—or fanaticism, if you will—which we are accustomed to associate with the earlier history of the human race; he may witness, in a word, the birth of a faith which may not impossibly win a place amidst the great religions of the world.²⁰

The electrifying effect that the phenomenon exerted, however—even on a cautious and scientifically trained European intellect and

19. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys* (1978; reprint Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), pp. 51–52.

20. E.G. Browne, Introduction to *A Traveller's Narrative: Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb*, by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Trans. E.G. Browne (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1930), p. viii.

after the passage of several decades—can be appreciated from Browne's concluding remarks in a major article in *Religious Systems of the World*, published in 1892, the year of Bahá'u'lláh's passing:

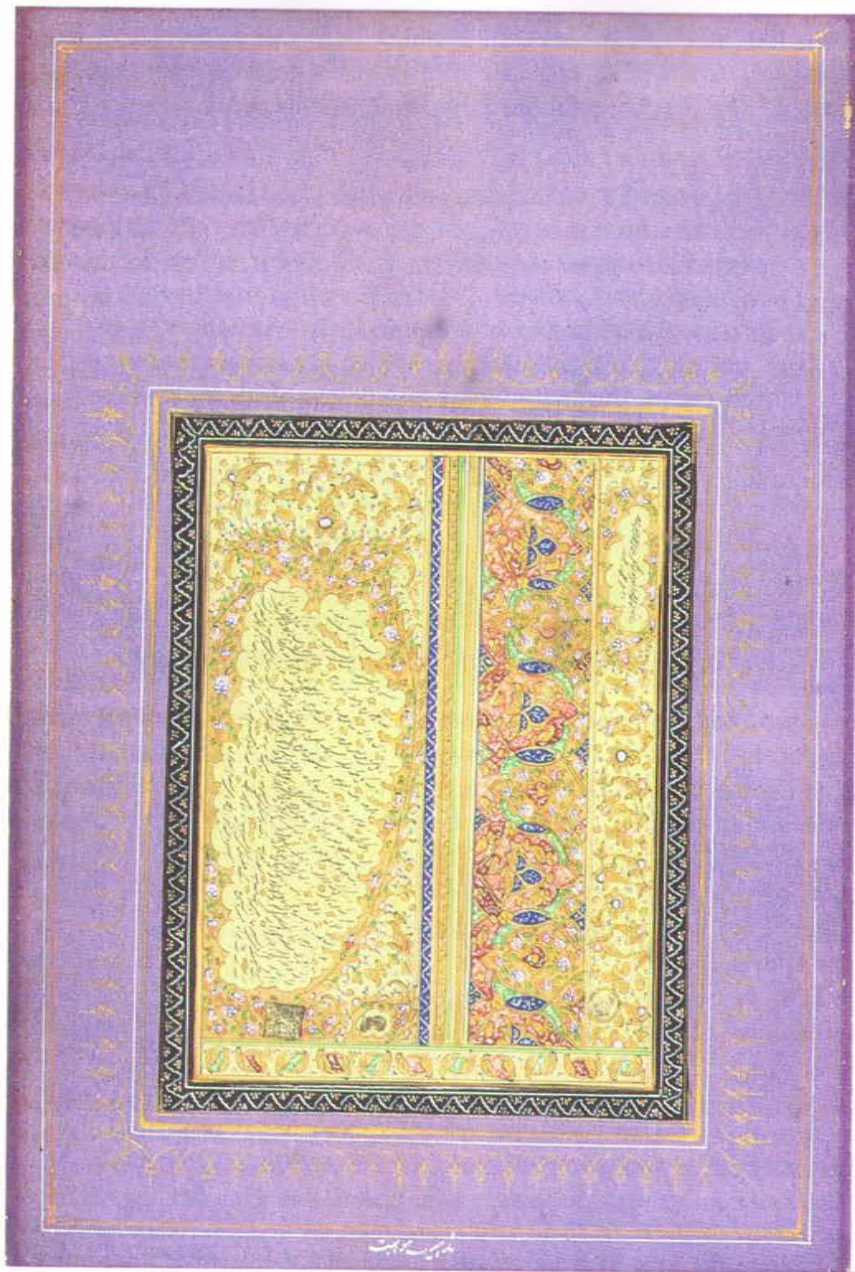
I trust that I have told you enough to make it clear that the objects at which this religion aims are neither trivial nor unworthy of the noble self-devotion and heroism of the Founder and his followers. It is the lives and deaths of these, their hope which knows no despair, their love which knows no cooling, their steadfastness which knows no wavering, which stamp this wonderful movement with a character entirely its own....

It is not a small or easy thing to endure what these have endured, and surely what they deemed worth life itself is worth trying to understand. I say nothing of the mighty influence which, as I believe, the Bábí faith will exert in the future, nor of the new life it may perchance breathe into a dead people; for, whether it succeed or fail, the splendid heroism of the Bábí martyrs is a thing eternal and indestructible.²¹

So powerful was this impression that most Western observers tended to lose sight of the Báb's purpose through fascination with His life and person. Browne himself, whose research made him pre-eminent among the second generation of European authorities on the Bábí movement, largely failed to grasp the role the Báb's mission played in preparing the way for the work of Bahá'u'lláh or, indeed, the way in which the achievements of the latter represented the Báb's eventual triumph and vindication.²² The French writer A.L.M. Nicolas was much more fortunate, in part simply because he lived long enough to benefit from a greater historical perspective.

21. E.G. Browne, "Bábiism," *Religious Systems of the World*, 3rd edition (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co. and New York: MacMillan & Co., 1892), pp. 352–353.

22. Browne's objectivity appears to have been clouded, as well, by his hope that the Bábis would focus their energies on the political reform of Persia itself. Criticizing what he saw as Bahá'u'lláh's diversion of Bahá'í energies from domestic politics to the cause of world unity, he complained that "...just now it is men who love their country above all else that Persia needs." English introduction to the *Nuqtatu'l-Káf*, cited in H.M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith* (London: George Ronald, 1970), p. 88.



*Illuminated tablet of the Báb, concerning
"Him Whom God shall make manifest"*

Initially antagonistic toward what he saw as Bahá'u'lláh's "supplanting" of the Báb, he came finally to appreciate the Bahá'í view that the Báb was one of two successive Manifestations of God whose joint mission is the unification and pacification of the planet.²³

This brief historical framework will be of assistance in understanding the thrust of the Báb's teachings. In one sense, His message is abundantly clear. As He repeatedly emphasized, the purpose of His mission and the object of all His endeavors was the proclamation of the imminent advent of "Him Whom God will make manifest," that universal Manifestation of God anticipated in religious scriptures throughout the ages of human history. Indeed, all of the laws revealed by the Báb were intended simply to prepare His followers to recognize and serve the Promised One at His advent:

We have planted the Garden of the Bayán [i.e., His Revelation] in the name of Him Whom God will make manifest, and have granted you permission to live therein until the time of His manifestation;...²⁴

The Báb's mission was to prepare humanity for the coming of an age of transformation beyond anything the generation that heard Him would be able to understand. Their duty was to purify their hearts so that they could recognize the One for Whom the whole world was waiting and serve the establishment of the Kingdom of God. The Báb was thus the "Door" through which this long-awaited universal theophany would appear.

At the time of the appearance of Him Whom God will make manifest the most distinguished among the learned and the lowliest of men shall both be judged alike. How often the most insignificant of men have acknowledged the truth, while the most learned have remained wrapt in veils.²⁵

23. *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 9, 1940–44 (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1945), pp. 584–585.

24. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 135.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Significantly, the initial references to the Promised Deliverer appear in the Báb's first major work, the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, passages of which were revealed by Him on the night of the declaration of His mission. The entire work is ostensibly a collection of commentaries on the *Súrih* of Joseph in the *Qur'án*, which the Báb interprets as foreshadowing the coming of the Divine "Joseph," that "Remnant of God" Who will fulfill the promises of the *Qur'án* and of all the other scriptures of the past. More than any other work, the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'* vindicated for Bábís the prophetic claims of its Author and served, throughout the early part of the Báb's ministry, as the *Qur'án* or the Bible of His community.

O peoples of the East and the West! Be ye fearful of God concerning the Cause of the true Joseph and barter Him not for a paltry price established by yourselves, or for a trifle of your earthly possessions, that ye may, in very truth, be praised by Him as those who are reckoned among the pious who stand nigh unto this Gate.²⁶

In 1848, only two years before His martyrdom, the Báb revealed the *Bayán*, the book which was to serve as the principal repository of his laws and the fullest expression of His theological doctrines. Essentially the book is an extended tribute to the coming Promised One, now invariably termed "Him Whom God will make manifest." The latter designation occurs some 300 times in the book, appearing in virtually every one of its chapters, regardless of their ostensible subject. The *Bayán* and all it contains depend upon His Will; the whole of the *Bayán* contains in fact "nought but His mention"; the *Bayán* is "a humble gift" from its Author to Him Whom God will make manifest; to attain His Presence is to attain the Presence of God. He is "the Sun of Truth," "the Advent of Truth," "the Point of Truth," "the Tree of Truth"²⁷:

I swear by the most holy Essence of God—exalted and glorified be He—that in the Day of the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest a thousand perusals of the *Bayán* cannot equal the perusal of a single verse to be revealed by Him Whom God shall make manifest.²⁸

Some of the most powerful references to the subject are contained in tablets which the Báb addressed directly to Him Whom God would soon make manifest:

Out of utter nothingness, O great and omnipotent Master, Thou hast, through the celestial potency of Thy might, brought me forth and raised me up to proclaim this Revelation. I have made none other but Thee my trust; I have clung to no will but Thy Will. Thou art, in truth, the All-Sufficing and behind Thee standeth the true God, He Who overshadoweth all things.²⁹

Apart from this central theme, the Báb's writings present a daunting problem for even those Western scholars familiar with Persian and Arabic. To a considerable degree, this is due to the fact that the works often address minute matters of *Shí'ih* Islamic theology which were of consuming importance to His listeners, whose minds had been entirely formed in this narrow intellectual world and who could conceive of no other. The study of the organizing spiritual principles within these writings will doubtless occupy generations of doctoral candidates as the Bahá'í community continues to expand and its influence in the life of society consolidates. For the Bábís, who received the writings at first hand, a great deal of their significance lay in their demonstration of the Báb's effortless mastery of the most abstruse theological issues, issues to which His ecclesiastical opponents had devoted years of painstaking study and dispute. The effect was to dissolve for the Báb's followers the intellectual foundations on which the prevailing Islamic theological system rested.

A feature of the Báb's writings which is relatively accessible

26. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 49.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

28. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 104.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

is the laws they contain. The Báb revealed what is, at first sight, the essential elements of a complete system of laws dealing with issues of both daily life and social organization. The question that comes immediately to the mind of any Western reader with even a cursory familiarity with Bábí history is the difficulty of reconciling this body of law which, however diffuse, might well have prevailed for several centuries, with the Báb's reiterated anticipation that "He Whom God will make manifest" would shortly appear and lay the foundations of the Kingdom of God. While no one knew the hour of His coming, the Báb assured several of His followers that they would live to see and serve Him. Cryptic allusions to "the year nine" and "the year nineteen" heightened the anticipation within the Bábí community. No one could falsely claim to be "He Whom God will make manifest," the Báb asserted, and succeed in such a claim.



Pocket Qur'an of the Báb

It is elsewhere that we must look for the immediate significance of the laws of the Bayán. The practice of Islam, particularly in its *Shí'ih* form, had become a matter of adherence to minutely detailed ordinances and prescriptions, endlessly elaborated by generations of mujtahids, and rigidly enforced. The *sharí'a*, or system of canon law, was, in effect, the embodiment of the clergy's authority over not only the mass of the population but even the monarchy itself. It contained all that mankind needed or could use. The mouth of God was closed until the Day of Judgment when the heavens would be cleft asunder, the mountains would dissolve, the seas would boil, trumpet blasts would rouse the dead from their graves, and God would "come down" surrounded by angels "rank on rank."

For those who recognized the Báb, the legal provisions of the

Bayán shattered the clergy's institutional authority at one blow by making the entire *sharí'a* structure irrelevant.³⁰ God had spoken anew. Challenged by a superannuated religious establishment which claimed to act in the name of the Prophet, the Báb vindicated His claim by exercising, in their fullness, the authority and powers that Islam reserved to the Prophets. More than any other act of His mission, it was this boldness that cost Him His life, but the effect was to liberate the minds and hearts of His followers as no other influence could have done. That so many laws of the Bayán should shortly be superseded or significantly altered by those laid down by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*³¹ was, in the perspective of history and in the eyes of the mass of the Bábís who were to accept the new Revelation, of little significance once the Báb's purpose had been accomplished.

In this connection, it is interesting to note the way in which the Báb dealt with issues that had no part in His mission, but which, if not addressed, could have become serious obstacles to His work because they were so deeply and firmly imbedded in Muslim religious consciousness. The concept of *jihád* or "holy war," for example, is a commandment laid down in the *Qur'án* as obligatory for all able-bodied male Muslims and one whose practice has figured prominently in Islamic societies throughout the ages. In the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'*, the Báb is at pains to include a form of *jihád* as one of the prerogatives of the station which He claims for Himself. He made any engagement in *jihád*, however, entirely dependent on His own approval, an approval which He declined to give. Subsequently, the Bayán, although representing the formal promulgation of the laws of the new Dispensation, makes only passing reference to a subject which had so long seemed fundamental to the exercise of God's Will. In ranging

30. The challenge came into sharp focus for the Báb's leading followers at a conference held at the small hamlet of Badashht in 1848. Interestingly, the figure who took the lead in bringing about a realization of the magnitude of the spiritual and intellectual changes set in motion by the Báb was a woman, the gifted poetess Táhírih, who was also later to suffer martyrdom for her beliefs.

31. "The Most Holy Book," Bahá'u'lláh's charter for a new world civilization, written in Arabic in 1873.

A small paisley wool money purse which belonged to the Báb.



across Persia to proclaim the new Revelation, therefore, the Báb's followers felt free to defend themselves when attacked, but their new beliefs did not include the old Islamic mandate to wage war on others for purposes of conversion.³²

In the perspective of history, it is obvious that the intent of these rigid and exacting laws was to produce a spiritual mobilization, and in this they brilliantly succeeded. Foreseeing clearly where the course on which he was embarked would lead, the Báb prepared His followers, through a severe regimen of prayer, meditation, self-discipline, and solidarity of community life, to meet the inevitable consequences of their commitment to His mission.

The prescriptions in the Bayán extend, however, far beyond those immediate purposes. Consequently, when Bahá'u'lláh took up the task of establishing the moral and spiritual foundations of the new Dispensation, He built directly on the work of the Báb. The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the "Mother Book" of the Bahá'í era, while not presented in the form of a systematic code, brings together for Bahá'ís the principal laws of their Faith. Guidance that relates to individual conduct or social practice is set in the framework of passages which summon the reader to a challenging new conception of human nature and purpose. A nineteenth-century Russian scholar who made one of the early attempts to translate the book compared Bahá'u'lláh's pen writing

32. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh formally abolishes holy war as a feature of religious life. See William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), pp. 13-14.

the Aqdas to a bird, now soaring on the summits of heaven, now descending to touch the homeliest questions of everyday need.

The connection with the writings of the Báb is readily apparent to anyone who examines the provisions of the Aqdas. Those laws of the Bayán which have no relevance to the coming age are abrogated. Other prescriptions are reformulated, usually through liberalizing their requirements and broadening their applications. Still other provisions of the Bayán are retained virtually in their original form. An obvious example of the latter is Bahá'u'lláh's adoption of the Báb's calendar, which consists of nineteen months of nineteen days each, with provision for an "intercalary" period of four or five days devoted to social gatherings, acts of charity, and the exchange of gifts with friends and family.

Apart from the specific laws of the Bayán, the Báb's writings also contain the seeds of new spiritual perspectives and concepts which were to animate the worldwide Bahá'í enterprise.



A crystal Persian tea glass and china saucer with rose luster flowers belonging to the Báb.

Beginning from the belief universally accepted by Muslims that God is one and transcendent, the Báb cuts sharply through the welter of conflicting doctrines and mystical speculations that had accumulated over more than twelve centuries of Islamic history. God is not only One and Single; He is utterly unknowable to humankind and will forever remain so. There is no direct connection between the Creator of all things and His creation.

The only avenue of approach to the Divine Reality behind existence is through the succession of Messengers Whom He sends. God “manifests” Himself to humanity in this fashion, and it is in the Person of His Manifestation that human consciousness



A ring belonging to the Báb

can become aware of both the Divine Will and the Divine attributes. What the scriptures have described as “meeting God,” “knowing God,” “worshiping God,” “serving God,” refers to the response of the soul when it recognizes the new Revelation. The advent of the Messenger of God is itself “the Day of Judgment.” The Báb thus denies the validity of Šūfī belief in the possibility of the individual’s mystical merging with the Divine

Being through meditation and esoteric practices:

Deceive not your own selves that you are being virtuous for the sake of God when you are not. For should ye truly do your works for God, ye would be performing them for Him Whom God shall make manifest and would be magnifying His Name.... Ponder awhile that ye may not be shut out as by a veil from Him Who is the Dayspring of Revelation.³³

Going far beyond the orthodox Islamic conception of a “succession” of the Prophets that terminates with the mission of Muḥammad, the Báb also declares the Revelation of God to be a recurring and never-ending phenomenon whose purpose is the gradual training and development of humankind. As human consciousness recognizes and responds to each Divine Messenger, the spiritual, moral, and intellectual capacities latent in it steadily develop, thus preparing the way for recognition of God’s next Manifestation.

The Manifestations of God—including Abraham, Moses,

33. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 86.

Jesus, and Muḥammad—are one in essence, although their physical persons differ, as do those aspects of their teachings that relate to an ever evolving human society. Each can be said to have two “stations”: the human and the Divine. Each brings two proofs of His mission: His own Person and the truths He teaches. Either of these testimonies is sufficient for any sincerely inquiring soul; the issue is purity of intention, and this human quality is particularly valued in the Báb’s writings. Through unity of faith, reason and behavior, each person can, with the confirmations of God, reach that stage of development where one seeks for others the same things that one seeks for oneself.

Those who sincerely believe in the Messenger whose faith they follow are prepared by it to recognize the next Revelation from the one Divine Source. They thus become instruments through which the Word of God continues to realize its purpose in the life of humankind. This is the real meaning of the references in past religions to “resurrection.” “Heaven” and “hell,” similarly, are not places but conditions of the soul. An individual “enters” paradise in this world when he recognizes God’s Revelation and begins the process of perfecting his nature, a process that has no end, since the soul itself is immortal. In the same way, the punishments of God are inherent in a denial of His Revelation and disobedience to laws whose operation no one can escape.

Many of these concepts in the Báb’s writing can appeal to various references or at least intimations in the scriptures of earlier religions. It will be obvious from what has been said, however, that the Báb places them in an entirely new context and draws from them implications very different from those which they bore in any previous religious system.

The Báb described His teachings as opening the “sealed wine” referred to in both the Qur’án and New Testament. The “Day of God” does not envision the end of the world, but its perennial renewal. The earth will continue to exist, as will the human race, whose potentialities will progressively unfold in response to the successive impulses of the Divine. All people are equal in the sight of God, and the race has now advanced to the point where, with the imminent advent of Him Whom God will manifest,

there is neither need nor place for a privileged class of clergy. Believers are encouraged to see the allegorical intent in passages of scriptures which were once viewed as references to supernatural or magical events. As God is one, so phenomenal reality is one, an organic whole animated by the Divine Will.

The contrast between this evolutionary and supremely rational conception of the nature of religious truth and that embodied by nineteenth-century *Shí'ih* Islam could not have been more dramatic. Fundamental to orthodox *Shí'ism*—whose full implications are today exposed in the regime of the Islamic Republic in Iran—was a literalistic understanding of the *Qur'án*, a preoccupation with meticulous adherence to the *sharí'a*, a belief that personal salvation comes through the “imitation” (*taqlíd*) of clerical mentors, and an unbending conviction that Islam is God's final and all-sufficient revelation of truth to the world. For so static and rigid a mindset, any serious consideration of the teachings of the Báb would have unthinkable consequences.

The Báb's teachings, like the laws of the Bayán, are enunciated not in the form of an organized exposition, but lie rather embedded in the wide range of theological and mystical issues addressed in the pages of His voluminous writings. It is in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh that, as with the laws of the Bayán, these scattered truths and precepts are taken up, reshaped, and integrated into a unified, coherent system of belief. The subject lies far beyond the scope of this brief paper, but the reader will find in Bahá'u'lláh's major doctrinal work, the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (“Book of Certitude”), not only echoes of the Báb's teachings, but a coherent exposition of their central concepts.

Finally, a striking feature of the Báb's writings, which has emerged as an important element of Bahá'í belief and history, is the mission envisioned for “the peoples of the West” and admiration of the qualities that fit them for it. This, too, was in dramatic contrast to the professed contempt for *farangi* and “infidel” thought that prevailed in the Islamic world of His time. Western scientific advancement is particularly praised, for

example, as are the fairness of mind and concern for cleanliness that the Báb saw Westerners on the whole as tending to display. His appreciation is not merely generalized but touches on even such mundane matters as postal systems and printing facilities.

At the outset of the Báb's mission, the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá' called on “the peoples of the West” to arise and leave their homes in promotion of the Day of God:

Become as true brethren in the one and indivisible religion of God, free from distinction, for verily God desireth that your hearts should become mirrors unto your brethren in the Faith, so that ye find yourselves reflected in them, and they in you. This is the true Path of God, the Almighty...³⁴

To a British physician who treated Him for injuries inflicted during his interrogation in Tabríz, the Báb expressed His confidence that, in time, Westerners, too, would embrace the truth of His mission.

This theme is powerfully taken up in the work of Bahá'u'lláh. A series of “tablets” called on such European rulers as Queen Victoria, Napoleon III, Kaiser Wilhelm I, and Tsar Alexander II to examine dispassionately “the Cause of God.” The British monarch is warmly commended for the actions of her government in abolishing slavery throughout the empire and for the establishment of constitutional government. Perhaps the most extraordinary theme the letters contain is a summons, a virtual mandate to “the Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein.” They are called on to “bind...the broken with the hands of justice” and to “crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of [their] Lord.”³⁵

Anticipating the decisive contribution which Western lands and peoples are destined to make in founding the institutions of world order, Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

34. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 56.

35. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 88.



A banquet held in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's honor at the Great Northern Hotel, New York, 23 November 1912. His visit to Europe and North America served to reinforce the early Bahá'í communities there and ultimately led to the expansion of the Bahá'í Faith around the globe.

In the East the Light of His Revelation hath broken; in the West have appeared the signs of His dominion. Ponder this in your hearts, O people....³⁶

It was on 'Abdu'l-Bahá that responsibility devolved to lay the foundations for this distinctive feature of the missions of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Visiting both Western Europe and North America in the years 1911–1913, He coupled high praise for the material accomplishments of the West with an urgent appeal that they be balanced with the essentials of “spiritual civilization.”

During the years of World War I, after returning to the Holy Land, 'Abdu'l-Bahá drafted a series of letters addressed to the small body of Bahá'u'lláh's followers in the United States and Canada, summoning them to arise and carry the Bahá'í message to the remotest corners of the globe. As soon as international

36. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 13.

conditions permitted, these Bahá'ís began to respond. Their example has since been followed by members of the many other Bahá'í communities around the world which have proliferated during subsequent decades.

To the North American believers, too, 'Abdu'l-Bahá confided the task of laying the foundations of the democratically elected institutions conceived by Bahá'u'lláh for the administration of the affairs of the Bahá'í community. The entire decision-making structure of the present-day administrative system of the Faith at local, national, and international levels, had its origins in these simple consultative assemblies formed by the American and Canadian believers.

Bahá'ís see a parallel pattern of response to the Divine mandate, however unrecognized, in the growing leadership Western nations have assumed throughout the present century in the efforts to bring about global peace. This is particularly true of the endeavor to inaugurate a system of international order. For his own vision in this respect, as well as for the lonely courage that the effort to realize it required, “the immortal Woodrow Wilson” won an enduring place of honor in the writings of the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.

Bahá'ís are likewise aware that it has been such governments as those of Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia which have taken the lead in the field of human rights. The Bahá'í community has experienced at first hand the benefits of this concern in the successful interventions undertaken on behalf of its members in Iran during the recurrent persecutions under the regimes of the Pahlavi shahs and the Islamic Republic.

Nothing of what has been said should suggest an uncritical admiration of European or North American cultures on the part of either the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh nor an endorsement of the ideological foundations on which they rest. Far otherwise. Bahá'u'lláh warns in ominous tones of the suffering and ruin that will be visited upon the entire human race if Western civilization continues on its course of excess. During His visits to Europe and America, 'Abdu'l-Bahá called on His hearers in poignant language to free themselves, while time still remained, from racial and national prejudices, as well as materialistic preoccupations,

whose unappreciated dangers, He said, threatened the future of their nations and of all humankind.

Today, a century and a half after the Báb's mission was inaugurated, the influence of His life and words has found expression in a global community drawn from every background on earth. The first act of most Bahá'í pilgrims on their arrival at the World Centre of their Faith is to walk up the flower-bordered avenue leading to the exquisite Shrine housing the Báb's mortal remains, and to lay their foreheads on the threshold of His resting place. They confidently believe that, in future years, "pilgrim kings" will reverently ascend the magnificent terraced staircase rising from the foot of the "Mountain of God" to the Shrine's entrance, and place the emblems of their authority at this same threshold. In the countries from which the pilgrims come, countless children from every background and every language today bear the names of the Báb's martyred companions—Ṭáhirih, Quddús, Ḥusayn, Zaynab, Vaḥíd, Anís—much as children throughout the lands of the Roman empire began 2,000 years ago to carry the unfamiliar Hebrew names of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Bahá'u'lláh's choice of a resting place for the body of His Forerunner—brought with infinite difficulty from Persia—itself holds great significance for the Bahá'í world. Throughout history the blood of martyrs has been "the seed of faith." In the age that is witnessing the gradual unification of humankind, the blood of the Bábí martyrs has become the seed not merely of personal faith, but of the administrative institutions which are, in the words of Shoghi Effendi, "the nucleus [and] the very pattern" of the World Order conceived by Bahá'u'lláh.³⁷ The relationship is symbolized by the supreme position that the Shrine of the Báb occupies in the progressive development of the administrative center of the Bahá'í Faith on Mount Carmel.

Few there must be among the stream of Bahá'í pilgrims entering these majestic surroundings today whose minds do not turn to the familiar words in which the Báb said farewell 150

37. *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 144.

years ago to the handful of His first followers, all of them bereft of influence or wealth and most of them destined, as He was, soon to lose their lives:

The secret of the Day that is to come is now concealed. It can neither be divulged nor estimated. The newly born babe of that Day excels the wisest and most venerable men of this time, and the lowliest and most unlearned of that period shall surpass in understanding the most erudite and accomplished divines of this age. Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His coming. Heed not your weaknesses and frailty; fix your gaze upon the invincible power of the Lord, your God, the Almighty.... Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.³⁸



Courtyard of the house of the Báb in Shiraz. The house was demolished by the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in September 1979 and the property used as a parking lot for an adjoining mosque.

38. *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 94.

WORLD WATCH

During 1994–95, the world’s preoccupation with the prospects and challenges of emerging globalization further deepened. In one of a number of notable documents released during the year, the ambivalence felt by many people about globalizing trends and the polarizing effects these trends are producing throughout the world is expressed:

The implications of globalization have...been contradictory—on the one hand, disturbing signs of national and social disintegration, and on the other, new forms of international cooperation. Since the processes of globalization are likely to intensify in the years ahead—making people’s life chances even more interdependent—the world will have to choose which trends should predominate. The question is not whether there will be a global community, but what kind of global community it should be.¹

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1. *States of Disarray: The Social Effects of Globalization*, A United Nations Research Institute for Social Development report for the World Summit for Social Development (1995), pp. 167–168.

Wrestling with this question of “what kind of global community it should be” has occupied world leaders in various arenas over the past few years. The grouping of nations through cultural links or economic and trade ties is now commonplace, and horizons continue to expand. But attitudes must also change in order to accommodate a new global order, and that is a challenging prospect for many.

To address both attitudes and practical concerns, the United Nations has focused on the kind of global community that is desirable by holding a number of large international gatherings. Beginning with the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and continuing through the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, the World Summit for Social Development in early 1995, and the Fourth World Conference on Women scheduled for September 1995, the United Nations has sought to bring both world leaders and grassroots organizations of civil society together to discuss the world’s most urgent problems—and to begin to devise solutions for them.

Whatever shortcomings may be apparent in these conferences, including the lack of binding agreements, the public wrangling, and the perception by some that they are forums where there is much talk and little real action, the mere fact that such global gatherings have occurred is in itself momentous. Attracting an unprecedented number of world leaders and demonstrating the emerging influence of non-governmental organizations, they have afforded people opportunities to exchange ideas and have moved topics such as the environment, human rights, population control, poverty and unemployment, and women’s concerns to the center of the world stage.

The meetings seem to have generated a new spirit among both participants and the general population. It would be very shortsighted to denigrate them because the world’s problems have not been resolved as a result. The problems are complex, and difficult decisions about “what kind of global community it should be” require a great deal more serious, intense discussion. Future gatherings such as the UN 50 observances scheduled for New

York in October 1995, an international conference on human settlements to take place in 1996, and the possible summit on global governance at some point before the end of the century will continue the dialogue commenced with such vigor in Rio in 1992.

As the discourse continues, however, the discussions will need to move to more profound levels or momentum will be lost. The Commission on Global Governance, in the opening pages of its report, clearly depicts not only the climate in which we live during the closing years of the twentieth century but outlines several distinct challenges in humanity’s path:

A time of change when future patterns cannot be clearly discerned is inevitably a time of uncertainty. There is need for balance and caution—and also for vision. Our common future will depend on the extent to which people and leaders around the world develop the vision of a better world and the strategies, the institutions, and the will to achieve it.²

It is significant that the Commission points to the development of a vision, of strategies, of institutions, and will as necessary factors in forging a new world. But the vision of a united world is not new. It was articulated by Bahá’u’lláh during the last century; it was expounded by His son ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, particularly during the addresses He made to the public and the press during His trip to the West in 1911–1913; and it was developed even further by the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, especially in his “World Order Letters” written between 1929 and 1936 as humanity hovered on the brink of the Second World War.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s views on the subject are succinctly stated in a letter written by Him in prison in Acre, Palestine, in 1906:

...all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and

2. *Our Global Neighborhood: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 12.

nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved.... Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century—the century of light—hath been endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man.³

The interdependence that was so clearly seen by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in 1906 is even more abundantly manifest in the closing decade of the century, though humanity admittedly has some distance to travel before it achieves the unity of which He wrote and the “glory, power and illumination” that is accessible to it. However, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not stop with general statements. He quickly went on to outline the different elements necessary for the establishment of unity in the world:

Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world’s darkened horizon. The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the cornerstone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendor. The fifth candle is the unity of nations—a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.³

At first blush, it may appear that the elements of unity out-

3. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá’i World Centre, 1978), pp. 31–32.

lined by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—unity in the political realm, of thought in world undertakings, in freedom, in religion, of nations, of races, and of language—have little to do with events that occurred during 1994–95, but a survey of the major concerns and developments show that the connection is, in fact, very strong indeed.

Governance was a central topic of concern for many social commentators during the year. People became increasingly cynical of their politicians, and major democracies suffered crises in confidence or toyed with secessionism. While some people wanted less government and espoused the doctrine of libertarianism, others saw problems with liberal individualism and promoted alternatives such as communitarianism. Ruthless dictators retained their stranglehold on power in some countries, while other nations drifted into various states of disorder, and militias wreaked havoc. People in many countries of the world expressed disillusionment with their political leaders, a sentiment inspired, in part, by increasingly widespread government corruption. Still others complained that we are governed by people who are artful in the ten-second sound-bite rather than those who understand how the world works, or that the world is governed increasingly by “happenstance” or by economic factors rather than by leaders setting policies and taking action on them. Leaders were seen as lacking in long-range vision. All of this demonstrated a basic discontent with current systems of government and with leaders—but no consensus on what should replace them.

In this context, in a speech given on 4 July 1994 as he was being presented with the Philadelphia Liberty Medal at Independence Hall, Czech President Vaclav Havel frankly declared that the values that have shaped America and other modern democracies—in his words “respect for the unique human being and his or her liberties and inalienable rights, and the principle that all power derives from the people”—are not sufficient for the creation of a new order in this postmodern age. Pointing out that “our civilization has essentially globalized only the surface of our lives,” he stated that a planetary civilization must be established firmly on generally held values and claimed, “The central political task of the final years of this century...is the creation of a new

model of co-existence among the various cultures, peoples, races and religious spheres within a single interconnected civilization.” To forge this new civilization and to find generally held values, he spoke of “self-transcendence” as the key, saying: “Only someone who submits to the authority of the universal order and of creation, who values the right to be a part of it and a participant in it, can genuinely value himself and his neighbors and thus honor their rights as well.”

Havel went on to suggest two possible ways for humanity to anchor itself in these new values, both coming from what he termed “post-modern science”: the first is “the anthropic cosmological principle,” which states that “we are mysteriously connected to the universe, we are mirrored in it, just as the entire evolution of the universe is mirrored in us”; the second is the “Gaia hypothesis,” which posits that the earth is a living thing, a “mega-organism” that will rid itself of human life in favor of life itself, if we do not tend it carefully.

These are worthy concepts, but as the Bahá’í International Community pointed out in its statement *The Prosperity of Humankind*, released in January 1995:

The earnest hope that [the] moral crisis [facing humanity] can somehow be met by deifying nature itself is an evidence of the spiritual and intellectual desperation that the crisis has engendered. Recognition that creation is an organic whole and that humanity has the responsibility to care for this whole, welcome as it is, does not represent an influence which can by itself establish in the consciousness of people a new system of values. Only a breakthrough in understanding that is scientific and spiritual in the fullest sense of the terms will empower the human race to assume the trusteeship toward which history impels it.⁴

American social thinkers, commenting on Havel’s speech, found it lacking in “an emphasis on institutions that can ground his vision.” Communitarianism’s leader Amitai Etzioni complained that Havel’s vision is “too spiritual,” continuing on to say that “Values do not fly about on wings. They need to be em-

bodied.”⁵ To be fair, however, it is difficult to deal with both theoretical and philosophical concepts and practical implementations in a single brief speech like Havel’s. But such complaints do indicate the degree to which the world is now searching for adequate social institutions to address the needs of humanity.

Such institutions were foretold by Bahá’u’lláh more than 100 years ago, and their development was elaborated upon by His appointed successors, as seen in the following passage written by Shoghi Effendi in 1931:

Some form of a world super-state must needs be evolved, in whose favor all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. Such a state will have to include within its orbit an international executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a world parliament whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose elections shall be confirmed by their respective governments; and a supreme tribunal whose judgment will have a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration. A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labor definitely recognized; in which the clamor of religious fanaticism and strife will have been forever stilled; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law—the product of the considered judgment of the world’s federated representatives—shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship—such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahá’u’lláh, an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.⁶

5. *Newsweek*, 18 July 1994.

6. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh: Selected Letters*, 2nd rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1974), pp. 40–41.

4. See p. 290 of this volume.

Forms seem to be gradually taking shape for the institutions envisaged by Shoghi Effendi some 60 years ago: while not composed of elected members, the United Nations is a kind of world parliament; the World Court, based in The Hague, arbitrates international disputes, although its rulings are not binding; United Nations peacekeepers have been seen as a prototypical collective security force; and countries are banding together into free trade zones throughout different regions of the world in an attempt to remove economic barriers. What is often missing, however, is the change in mindset necessary for the world to become a truly global community. Nationalism, racism, religious intolerance, and warmongering resulting from these causes, plague the world to a degree at least equal to the influences working to unify humanity.

Some issues have brought home the urgency of the need to move beyond national, racial, or religious boundaries—and beyond the superficial globalism of which Havel spoke in Philadelphia. International crises such as the AIDS epidemic, the volatility of economies and markets around the world (witness the effects of the collapse of the Mexican peso), war atrocities, the proliferation of nuclear arms, and other such factors have served such a role.

The struggle towards global consciousness can clearly be seen in the United Nations' efforts to stem the destructive forces of nationalism in the Balkans and in its emergency work following the genocide fuelled by tribal hatreds in Rwanda—and in reactions by some to those efforts. While some reviled the United Nations and NATO for the failure of the Bosnian peace mission, others recognized that the difficulties arose, in no small part, from lack of unity among Security Council members and their reluctance to take the risk of suffering some casualties to prevent mass slaughter of the civilian populations. Dialogue has, as a result, begun on the need for new forms, rules, and methods, including a training system, to strengthen UN peacekeeping; the need for a multinational force with authorization to intervene to prevent large-scale civilian suffering; the necessity of better communications between national capitals where plans are made and the peacekeepers who are trying to fulfil the international community's mandate; and

the need for the world to move beyond the point where the participation of the US, the world's sole remaining superpower, is required to maintain order. In spite of the horrific violence in evidence during the year, these factors seem to lend some weight to UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's assertion that "There are signs that the system of collective security established in San Francisco nearly 50 years ago is finally beginning to work as conceived and that it is proving able to respond flexibly to new challenges. We are on the way to achieving a workable international system."⁷

A number of other important steps were taken towards the establishment of peace in various parts of the world. Israel signed a treaty with Jordan and, in spite of suicide bus bombings and other acts of violence, continued negotiations with the Palestinian Liberation Organization—an effort for which Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat received the Nobel Peace Prize. In Mozambique, the United Nations peacekeepers were successful in helping to end a fifteen-year civil war, with the holding of the first free and fair election in the country's history.

Women's rights and human rights in general continued to be a major issue on the world stage, where basic rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have come under increasing attack. Studies indicate that human rights violations are on the rise, often fuelled by nationalism, tribalism, or religious intolerance, with current patterns of abuse involving more mass killings, summary executions, and "disappearances" than ever before, according to Amnesty International. War is particularly hard on women, who are often raped, tortured, or made the objects of reprisal killings. In tandem with human rights abuses, the international refugee problem continues to grow; the United Nations High Commission for Refugees is swamped, as statistics now indicate that one in every 115 people on earth is in exile or somehow displaced, and refugee camps have become havens for thugs who control aid distribution and have forced humanitarian agencies to pull out—often under threat.

7. *International Herald Tribune*, 2 November 1994.

What has the world learned from these tragedies? The mass killings in Rwanda and the "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia have demonstrated an urgent need for international monitors and an international force potent enough to step in and enforce international humanitarian law. In the wake of these atrocities the United Nations has set up a war crimes tribunal to punish perpetrators—perhaps the prelude to the establishment of a world criminal court. On a wider level, recent events have sparked discussion on and reevaluation of human rights. While some have argued that they are subordinate to cultural concerns, others such as the Burmese Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Sun Kyi have asserted that human rights are universal. As she wrote in an opinion piece in the *International Herald Tribune* on 7 December 1994, "It is precisely because of the cultural diversity of the world that it is necessary for different nations and peoples to agree on those basic human values which will act as a unifying force." Such a view closely echoes that voiced by Shoghi Effendi in his 1931 discussion of the new world order towards which Bahá'ís are working:

It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity....⁸

In addition to peace-keeping and peace-making initiatives and dialogues on governance and human rights, the world is moving towards globalization on other fronts. The foundations of a code of international law, arms agreements, and delineations of new economic zones are steadily being laid with each passing year. United Nations conventions such as those on the Law of the Sea and on Desertification (the latter ratified by 100 countries in

8. Shoghi Effendi, *World Order*, pp. 41–42.

October 1994) provide a basis for settling international disputes and address serious environmental concerns. Outside the United Nations, talks continued on extending the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) was signed by 118 countries, while signatories to another international agreement sought to make the fight against AIDS a top priority in their countries. Border crossings came down in the countries of the European Union, and various regions of the world look towards hemispheric free-trade accords.

Another attempt to deal with urgent difficulties facing humanity was embodied in the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995. This event was a first step by world leaders in collectively addressing the very serious social problems, including poverty, joblessness, and inequities in the global distribution of wealth, facing large numbers of the human family in a climate where the gap between the richest and poorest 20 percent of the world's population has doubled, from 30-fold to 60-fold, over the past 30 years; where one-fifth of the world's people is responsible for four-fifths of the world's consumption; where projections of global economic growth do not see a reduction in poverty; and where the growing population of the poor causes increased environmental stress and social deterioration. While some conference participants suggested that the UN should establish an "economic security council" to deal with such issues, a more proactive initiative was undertaken by the "Group of 77," consisting of over 130 developing nations which signed a non-binding agreement following the Summit that 20 percent of aid to their countries shall be marked for basic social needs such as schools, hospitals, and women's programs.

The previous September, the United Nations Conference on Population and Development in Cairo had pointed out that when women are empowered through education, economic and social progress results and population growth is curbed. Because studies show that births decline in societies where women receive education and are able to take more control over their lives, the Cairo Conference promoted the empowerment of women as a major strategy in family planning. In a world where two-thirds of the illiterate people in the world are women, where 90 million

girls are denied primary education, where dowry deaths in India have increased 170 percent in the past decade, and where the widespread practice of aborting female fetuses detectable through ultrasound technology has resulted in a growing “gender gap,” particularly in Asia, statistics from developing nations with falling birthrates indicate that focusing on women as agents of change, working with community-based family planning, and gaining the active support of local religious leaders are effective in curbing population growth. Such an approach recognizes that, in the words of *The Prosperity of Humankind*, “The most important role that economic efforts must play in development lies...in equipping people and institutions with the means through which they can achieve the real purpose of development: that is, laying foundations for a new social order that can cultivate the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness.”⁹

Such empowerment provides challenges to traditional male-female roles, both within the family circle and in the wider circle of the community, but meeting such challenges is an essential element in the progress of humanity. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated in America in 1912, “...until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible. For the world of humanity consists of two parts or members: one is woman; the other is man. Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality.”¹⁰

A cluster of other issues and developments highlighted during the year also underlined the struggle towards global consciousness. For example, the idea of “race”—that concept underlying so many of the world’s social ills—was labelled a “scientific antique” by scientists and researchers, following release of results of a long-term scientific study of DNA samples from around the world that revealed that races do not have distinct genetic types.

9. See p. 288 of this volume.

10. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 74–77.

Such findings effectively undercut the scientific basis of the conclusion that race determines IQ, a view advanced by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein in their book *The Bell Curve*. While racial prejudice continued to fuel strife around the world, some countries such as South Africa have begun to transcend such factors to focus on rebuilding a society that will benefit all, and there is increasing recognition of the need everywhere for a pluralism that, in the words of UNESCO Secretary General Federico Mayor, “requires that a sense of cultural differences be complemented by a recognition of wider cultural affinities,” thus recognizing diversity but discovering within it a unity capable of holding the human race together.

Likewise, in the area of religion, while some adherents practiced intolerance and committed violent acts, interreligious activities increased. Religious communities collaborated on a “global ethic” following a meeting in Chicago commemorating the centenary of the 1893 Parliament of the World’s Religions. Participants at a gathering of the World Conference on Religion and Peace on the theme “Healing the World: Religions for Peace” at the Vatican in November 1994, heard Pope John Paul II urge that the concept of “holy wars” be denounced, saying, “Religion and peace go together: to wage war in the name of religion is a blatant contradiction.” The Pope’s statement echoes a teaching of Bahá’u’lláh, Who proclaimed to His followers over 100 years ago, “Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.”¹¹

Because crime is taking on an increasingly international scope, governments and international agencies are challenged to devise new strategies to cope. Laws enabling men who engage in “sex tourism” to be prosecuted once they return home, a new international anti-corruption initiative with the goal of establishing an international convention on corruption and promotion of standard international codes of ethics for businesses, and collaborative efforts to curb migrant trafficking in Europe are some steps taken in the area.

11. Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Haifa: Bahá’í World Centre, 1978), p. 22.

As people struggle to come to terms with the attitude change required to breathe life into the concept of globalism, the technology linking the different regions of the world improves ever more rapidly—with the capability of shaping behavior both positively and negatively. Satellite technology, for example, has led to the establishment of regional and global television networks that are beginning to focus more on the needs of the populations they address than on importing Western programming. In Russia, live television coverage of the war in Chechnya led Russian mothers to flock to the war zone to reclaim their soldier-sons, and in Rwanda, action by the international community was spurred on, to no small extent, by public reaction to the horrifying television images of the massacres. Recognizing the role of “hate broadcasts” in promoting massacres in Rwanda and Bosnia, some commentators suggested the media be used, instead, for “electronic peacekeeping” through radio broadcasts in wartorn areas.

The Internet represents the fastest-growing technology of mass communication—a technology heralded in the Bahá’í writings almost 60 years ago when, in a letter to the Bahá’ís of the West in 1936, Shoghi Effendi envisioned “A mechanism of world inter-communication [that] will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity.”¹² While the Internet, with a 350,000 percent increase in traffic during 1994, has become virtually indispensable for any global organization, serious concerns such as crime, pornography, security of personal information, and the use of the Internet technology for subversive purposes have not been effectively addressed. And while in the past the Internet has gloried in its lack of hierarchical structure, experts are beginning to ponder how it can be transformed from the current anarchic system into a global information infrastructure of vital use to many more of the world’s people than now have access to it.

All of these factors, from technology to issues of governance, leadership, peacekeeping and other global concerns, have made the world more conscious than ever before of its increasing inter-

12. *World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 203.

dependence. While some forces are resisting this evolution, many of the world’s peoples are attempting to come to grips with it and look forward to the benefits that such interdependence can bring. The United Nations, while imperfect because its member states are imperfect, plays an important role in these changes. Thomas Homer-Dixon, director of the Peace and Conflict Studies program at the University of Toronto, perhaps best summed up the pragmatic approach to the UN in these words:

It is currently fashionable to believe that governments can’t do anything right and should therefore be reduced in size. By this logic, less government is better government. But global political and economic affairs are becoming ever more complex. Populations are growing. The gap between the poorest and the richest people on the planet is widening. Knowledge, goods, diseases, financial instruments, pollution and crime know no boundaries. Migrants and refugees are on the move in unprecedented numbers. To deal with these converging and urgent pressures, capable international government is essential. The United Nations may be unruly, cumbersome and irresolute, but it is the only international government we have. We must do what we can to reform it to better serve humanity’s needs.¹³

Can the world turn its back on the factors that are moving it towards greater and greater levels of international cooperation—and what would be the consequences if it were to do so?

Over 100 years ago, Bahá’u’lláh wrote, “The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.”¹⁴ In 1936, Shoghi Effendi elaborated upon this same theme:

Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal

13. Thomas Homer-Dixon, “War and Peace: The Ominous Trends around the World,” *Maclean’s*, 9 January 1995.

14. Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, 3rd ed. (Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 286.

towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life.¹⁵

The worldwide Bahá'í community, with a membership spread over some 120,000 localities and including every country, stands as an example that such unification is possible. In Shoghi Effendi's words:

The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has assimilated, by virtue of its creative, its regulative and ennobling energies, the varied races, nationalities, creeds and classes that have sought its shadow, and have pledged unswerving fealty to its cause. It has changed the hearts of its adherents, burned away their prejudices, stilled their passions, exalted their conceptions, ennobled their motives, coordinated their efforts, and transformed their outlook. While preserving their patriotism and safeguarding their lesser loyalties, it has made them lovers of mankind, and the determined upholders of its best and truest interests.¹⁶

It is impossible for the world to retreat into nationalistic or tribalistic enclaves at this stage in its history, and it will be basically unstable if it remains globalized at only a superficial level. But it will take a powerful motivating vision, unwavering implementation of decisions reached through strenuous consultation among the world's leaders, and strong will on the part of both leaders and the peoples of the world for ours to become a true global society. The benefits are inestimable.

15. *World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 202.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

Ann Boyles provides a basic outline of the Bahá'í teachings concerning the arts as well as a brief survey of some expressions given to them by members of the Faith, both historical and contemporary.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART:

Arts in the Bahá'í World Community

“One of the names of God is the Fashioner. He loveth craftsmanship.”¹ These words of Bahá'u'lláh accord an eminence to the practice of arts and crafts that is unprecedented in any religious dispensation. His writings also allude to the central role of artists in society, stating that “...the true worth of artists and craftsmen should be appreciated, for they advance the affairs of mankind.”² The distinction and significance of a number of professions are extolled, but Bahá'u'lláh's specific mention of artists and craftsmen as advancing the affairs of mankind opens a revolutionary perspective on their role in society.

‘Abdu'l-Bahá reiterated His Father's teachings concerning the arts, saying, “It is the commandment of the Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh],...that whosoever engageth in a craft, should

1. Bahá'u'lláh, from a tablet translated from the Persian, cited in “Extracts from the Writings Concerning Arts and Crafts,” in *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1 (Mona Vale: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991), p. 1.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

endeavor to acquire in it utmost proficiency. Should he do so, that craft becometh a form of worship.”³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also counselled parents to educate their children to become accomplished practitioners of the arts, as seen in the following passage:

While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly grace, foster them in the cradle of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies that will benefit mankind.⁴

The mention of education in the arts in close proximity to phrases such as “matters of great import” and “studies that will benefit mankind” indicates that, in the Bahá’í view, the arts are not at the periphery of our existence but are rather at the very heart of it.

Contemporary Canadian painter Otto Donald Rogers has put it this way:

Art...has a fundamental role to play in the evolution of community since artistic form is not simply the ornament of society but is an important measurement of the progress made in reaching the ideal. The creation of models of profound beauty have, by their very order, educative effect; art becomes in time a common experience of unity in the culture of a whole population.⁵

The “unity” of which Rogers writes is not the same as uniformity. One of the fundamental principles taught by Bahá’u’lláh is “unity in diversity,” and for this reason the Bahá’í Faith has resisted the tendency to force creative expression into specific rigid

3. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a tablet translated from the Persian, cited in “Extracts from the Writings Concerning Arts and Crafts,” in *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 4.
4. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá’í World Centre, 1978), p. 129.
5. Otto Donald Rogers, “The Moral Circumstance of Artistic Intent” (unpublished essay).

or characteristic forms. If the universality of the Faith is to be safeguarded, it logically follows that there will be many different art forms throughout the world, shaped by varying cultural factors but all expressing a common faith. As one letter written on behalf of the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith by his secretary in 1957 states: “The believers are free to paint, write and compose as their talents guide them.... The further away the friends keep from any set forms, the better, for they must realize that the Cause is absolutely universal....”⁶ It is exciting to contemplate the richness that such freedom brings to artistic expression.

This principle of unity in diversity also signals an acceptance of artistic contributions by community members who possess varying levels of skill and training. Rogers points out, “...the gift of artistic insight is not confined to the few whose talent has been recognized and educated, but it is generously spread by an all-loving Creator throughout the generality of mankind.”⁷ Once we recognize that we can all use this gift of artistic insight to enrich our communities, we can accept and welcome a wide diversity of artistic pursuits, at varying levels of sophistication, and benefit from the new dimensions they add to our community life.

In time, nurtured in an atmosphere where the arts are a central part of social life, the general population will become more receptive to artistic expression and new artists will arise with ever increasing capacities to give voice to their vision—a vision that will transcend many contemporary artistic expressions with their tendencies towards self-referentiality.

Since the inception of the Bahá’í Faith in 1844, the arts have played a significant role. Bahá’u’lláh Himself wrote beautiful poems. Adib Taherzadeh, in his history *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh*, describes an event that occurred during Bahá’u’lláh’s two-year sojourn in the mountainous area of Sulaymáníyyih:

6. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, 20 July 1946; cited in “Compilation of Extracts from the Bahá’í Writings on Music,” in *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2 (Mona Vale: Bahá’í Publications Australia, 1991), p. 81.
7. Otto Donald Rogers, “Expanding and Consolidating the Cause of God: The Contribution of the Arts,” in *Bahá’í Canada* (Kalimát, B.E. 151), p. 36.

The divines of Sulaymáníyyih requested Bahá'u'lláh to undertake a task, which no one had previously accomplished, of writing a poem in the same rhyme as *Qaṣidiy-i-Tá'íyyih*, one of the works of the celebrated Arabic poet Ibn-i-Fárid.

Accepting their request, Bahá'u'lláh dictated no less than two thousand verses as He sat in their midst. Amazed at such a revelation, those present were spellbound and lost in admiration at His performance. They acclaimed His verses as far superior in their beauty, lucidity and profundity to the original poem by Ibn-i-Fárid. Knowing that the subject-matter was beyond the people's comprehension, He chose one hundred and twenty-seven verses and allowed them to be copied.⁸

Many eminent Persian figures in the arts were attracted to the new Faith, most notably the poet Ṭáhirih, whose works are still studied in today's Iran and elsewhere, in spite of her reputation as "heretical" to the fundamentalist Muslim regime. Other poets embraced this new Faith as well and gave voice to their beliefs in their writing, according to their individual talent. In His book recording the lives of distinguished early Bahá'ís, entitled *Memorials of the Faithful*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá includes a number of poets: Nabil-i-Zarandí, often referred to as the 'Poet-Laureate' of the Bahá'í Faith; Áqá Šidq-'Alí; Áqá Muḥammad Ibráhím; Ustád 'Alí-Akbar; and Mírzá Áqá, Jináb-i-Muníb. Of Nabil, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote: "This distinguished man was erudite, wise, and eloquent of speech. His native genius was pure inspiration, his poetic gift like a crystal stream. His ode 'Bahá, Bahá!' was written in sheer ecstasy."⁹ Other Persian poets included Mírzá 'Alí-Muḥammad, titled Varqá or 'Dove' by Bahá'u'lláh, and Andalíb.

But poets were not the only artists who featured in the early history of the Faith. One of Bahá'u'lláh's faithful followers into exile was the renowned Persian calligrapher Mishkín-Qalam, whose name means "musk-scented pen." He created exquisite calligraphic renderings of many of Bahá'u'lláh's sacred writings.

8. Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh: Baghdád 1853-63*, vol. 1 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1974), pp. 62-63.

9. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), p.35.

The poet Jináb-i-Muníb was also a fine calligrapher.

Western writers and artists were attracted to the romance of the story of the Báb from the inception of His Faith, learning of it through the sympathetic accounts of the French chroniclers A.L.M. Nicolas and the Comte de Gobineau.¹⁰ The English poet Matthew Arnold mentioned the Báb in "A Persian Passion Play," his essay on Shí'ih Islam. Sarah Bernhardt was so enthralled with the story of Ṭáhirih that she commissioned a play on her life, though no extant copy has yet been found. Tolstoy learned of the Bahá'í Faith and commented positively on it, and the Russian writer Izabella Grinevskaya penned a play on the life of the Báb that was produced in Paris in 1912. These were among the earliest Western artistic responses to this new religion.

During His travels in the West between the years 1911 and 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá offered specific words of encouragement to Bahá'ís who wished to pursue projects in the arts, in statements such as the following: "All Art is a gift of the Holy Spirit. When this light shines through the mind of a musician, it manifests itself in beautiful harmonies. Again, shining through the mind of a poet, it is seen in fine poetry and poetic prose. When the Light of the Sun of Truth inspires the mind of a painter, he produces marvellous pictures. These gifts are fulfilling their highest purpose, when showing forth the praise of God."¹¹ From such passages, artists influenced by the Bahá'í revelation have drawn their inspiration and orientation. While Shoghi Effendi indicated in 1957 that there can be no distinctive Bahá'í cultural expression at this early stage in the Faith's history since fine music, literature, art, and architecture are the flower of a mature society,¹² one can certainly see development in the arts already. Throughout the twentieth century, Bahá'í artistic expressions have multiplied, have become increasingly representative of the

10. For further details, see "The Mission of the Báb," pp. 193-225.

11. Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1954), p. 167.

12. From a letter written 21 September 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States; cited in "Extracts from the Writings Concerning Arts and Crafts" in *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, p. 8.

vast cultural diversity of the planet's peoples, and have achieved greater and greater levels of sophistication.¹³

One of the best-known twentieth-century visual artists to become a member of the Bahá'í Faith was Mark Tobey. As a young portrait-painter in New York City in 1918, he was introduced to the religion by Juliet Thompson, another portrait-painter who was an ardent Bahá'í. Tobey remained a firm believer throughout his life, and the effect of his religion on his art was often noted, as in the following excerpt from William C. Seitz's essay for Tobey's Museum of Modern Art exhibition, where he wrote: "Without doubt this [acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith] was the crucial spiritual redirection of Tobey's life and of his development as an artist."¹⁴

In the 1930s, as he was teaching art at Dartington Hall in England, Tobey encountered Bernard Leach and Reginald Turvey. Leach was a well-known potter who had heard about the Bahá'í Faith initially in 1914 from Agnes Alexander, an American Bahá'í who had settled in Japan. Leach and Turvey, good friends from their days of study together at art school, both investigated the Faith and became members. For Leach, it seemed a natural progression of his desire to fuse the aesthetic and spiritual values and visions of the East and the West, a goal of his since his early years. Turvey, too, had long had an interest in spiritual matters, and he was sustained throughout his artistic career—a career in which his talent was not widely recognized until very late—by the Bahá'í teaching that artistic expression is a form of worship and service to humanity.

Contemporary Canadian painter Otto Donald Rogers has also drawn inspiration for his work from the Bahá'í writings. Over 1,000 pieces of the work of Saskatchewan-born Rogers, a professor of Fine Arts at the University of Saskatchewan from 1959–88, can be found in public, private, and corporate collections throughout North America. In 1987 he was invited to the

Triangle Workshop hosted by Anthony Caro and the City of Barcelona. Attributing the influence of his beliefs on his work, he has described art as "our human response to a voice from on high."¹⁵ Critics have commented that his paintings portray "spiritual quest" and convey a sense of "mystic prairies washed by spiritual rains." The year 1992 saw the release of a one-hour video documentary, *Approach to a Sacred Place: The Art of Otto Rogers*, that explores the connection between Rogers' faith and art. Produced by Film Crew Productions of Regina, Saskatchewan, it was shown on the Canadian national television network in 1993.

On the literary front, American poet Robert Hayden received such honors as the Grand Prize for Poetry at the first World Festival of the Arts in Dakar, Senegal, in 1965 and was appointed as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, between 1976 and 1978. He also sought to express his spiritual vision, informed by his beliefs as a Bahá'í, through his poetry. Of his work, he wrote, "I think of the writing of poems as one way of coming to grips with inner and outer realities—as a spiritual act, really, a sort of prayer for illumination and perfection. The Bahá'í Faith, with its emphasis on the essential oneness of mankind and its vision of world unity, is an increasingly powerful influence on my poetry today—and the only one to which I willingly submit."¹⁶ Hayden, who died in 1980, is now recognized in the literary world as a poet of outstanding technique, and critics are beginning to appreciate the extent to which his poems are shot through with symbols informed by his religious convictions. In 1984 the first full-length exploration of the influence of the Bahá'í Faith on Hayden's work, *From the Auroral Darkness*, appeared, authored by poet and critic John Hatcher.

Canadian Bahá'í Roger White, who died in early 1993, was a prolific and much-loved poet. Versatile in a number of literary

13. See William P. Collins, *Bibliography of English-language Works on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths, 1844–1985* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1990) which lists published references to a number of well-known Bahá'í artists.

14. William C. Seitz, *Mark Tobey* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1962), p. 43.

15. Otto Donald Rogers, introduction to the catalogue of his exhibition at the Canadian Art Galleries, Calgary, Alberta (1991).

16. Quoted in *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 18, 1979–1983 (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1986), p. 717.

genres, he produced four substantial volumes of poetry and poetic sketches, numerous chapbooks and monographs, poetic sketches, a novel, and critical essays. His works have been widely read and performed throughout the Bahá'í world community. American writer Michael Fitzgerald, himself a prolific poet, has also written of spiritual themes and edited a 1989 volume of essays on the arts, entitled *The Creative Circle: Art, Literature, and Music in Bahá'í Perspective*.¹⁷

The Association for Bahá'í Studies in North America has encouraged the arts, not only through artistic presentations at its conferences throughout the years, but through a creative writing award given annually in conjunction with the Association's essay contest. It has also produced a number of publications on the arts, including a monograph of poems in honor of the Bahá'ís persecuted and martyred in Iran following the 1979 Islamic Revolution and another volume containing both poetry and articles by critics and writers such as Bahíyyih Nakhjavání and Geoffrey Nash. The Bahá'í Association for Arts, based in the Netherlands, is another organization that has actively supported the development of Bahá'í artists.

Contemporary Norwegian composer Lasse Thoresen is a musician whose work has been intensely affected and directly shaped by his belief in Bahá'u'lláh. Responding to an interviewer's question about inspiration, he commented:

As a Bahá'í and an artist, my ideal is of course to convey some spiritual insight through my music, hopefully without my own ego too much in the way. To purify the mental sources of inspiration, to open the right channels, so to speak, one has to submit oneself to some spiritual discipline, and the Bahá'í Faith has offered me many means and opportunities to do that. It still does—this process never ends.¹⁸

Thoresen's work has been commissioned by the Norwegian Philharmonic Orchestra and French National Radio, and has

17. Michael Fitzgerald, ed. *The Creative Circle: Art, Literature, and Music in Bahá'í Perspective* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1989).

18. "Ladder of the Soul: An Interview with Lasse Thoresen," with Trym Bergsmo, in *The Creative Circle*, p. 194.

been critically acclaimed for its innovative incorporation of different modern media. In early 1994, well-known Norwegian vocalist Anne-Lise Berntsen performed several of his vocal works at the opening of the first Norwegian exhibition of Mark Tobey's paintings. In March 1995, she performed two Bahá'í prayers set to music by Thoresen at the opening of the Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum at the United Nations World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, Denmark. Thoresen's symphony "Carmel Eulogies" also premiered with the Oslo Philharmonic in November 1994.¹⁹

Tolibkhan Shakhidi, former Vice-Minister of Culture and more recently Artistic Director of the Opera in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, is a renowned Tajik composer who has also found ways to incorporate his belief in the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith into his work.

Eminent jazz trumpeter John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie was an active proponent of Bahá'í teachings from his acceptance of the Faith in 1968 until his passing in 1993. His "United Nations Band" was in its diversity a model of the principle of racial unity. In his memoirs, he wrote, "Becoming a Bahá'í changed my life in every way and gave me a new concept of the relationship between God and man—between man and his fellow man—man and his family. It's just all consuming. I became more spiritually aware, and when you're spiritually aware, that will be reflected in what you do."²⁰

Seals and Crofts, a popular music duo in the 1970s, represented Bahá'í-inspired art on another front. With songs such as "Summer Breeze" receiving wide airplay on radio stations in the US and Canada and with sell-out concerts across the continent, Jimmy Seals and Dash Crofts made no secret of their adherence to the Bahá'í Faith. More recently, Dan Seals, a popular performer in country music circles, has written and performed songs that reflect Bahá'í-inspired ideals.

In 1973, Michele Danesh, a former principal dancer with the

19. See p. 264.

20. Dizzy Gillespie, with Al Fraser, *To Be, or Not...To Bop: Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), p. 474.



Canada's Ballet Shayda performing "Day of the Dawning," a dance depicting the heroism of Iranian Bahá'ís in the face of persecution.

National Ballet of Washington, DC, and the American Festival Ballet, established Ballet Shayda—the first ballet company to present Bahá'í ideas through the medium of dance. Based in Ottawa and operating for over ten years on a semi-professional basis with eighteen dancers, the company toured Canada and the eastern US, appearing before large gatherings of 10,000 people as well as at more intimate settings such as schools, hospitals, community centers, and camps. Ballet Shayda's repertoire, which consisted entirely of original works based on universal themes, was choreographed by Danesh in both classical and contemporary styles of dance. Two of the company's pieces were "Earth Moves," a classical ballet dedicated to the preservation of the environment, and "Day of the Dawning," a modern drama-in-dance inspired by the situation of the Iranian Bahá'í community and focusing on the themes of heroism and martyrdom. Responding to this last piece, one critic described it as "gripping dance-drama replete with highly original touches."

On the African continent, a multidimensional theater group named Afrika Bikonda was formed in Côte d'Ivoire in the mid-

1980s, incorporating theater, poetry, dance, and drumming. Its works have been broadcast by television stations in Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Guinea, and Mali, and one of its original plays, *La Demande en Divorce*, won third prize at the First Festival of Popular Theater in Abidjan in 1992.

As individual artists increasingly felt inspired to express their faith in their creative pursuits, Bahá'í administrative institutions began to offer more specific encouragement and direction with regard to the development of arts in the Bahá'í community. The Universal House of Justice has repeatedly emphasized that Bahá'í youth around the world should "consider the best ways in which they can use and develop their native abilities for the service of mankind and the Cause of God, whether this be as farmers, teachers, doctors, artisans, musicians, or any one of the multitude of livelihoods that are open to them."²¹ In anticipation of the International Year of Peace in 1986, the Universal House of Justice wrote that National Spiritual Assemblies should encourage Bahá'í artists and their non-Bahá'í colleagues to give expression "through the various arts to important themes relating to world peace."²² During the Six Year Plan for the expansion and consolidation of the Bahá'í community, the Universal House of Justice called once again for increasing use of the arts—particularly drama—in the Bahá'í community.

Such encouragement has borne fruit. In Canada, for example, the Bahá'í community sponsored two successful national Bahá'í arts festivals in 1988 and 1989, and similar ventures have been launched in other countries around the world. Arts forums and institutes have been founded in places such as Wienacht, Switzerland, and Atlanta, Georgia. Theatrical and musical groups have formed in locales as diverse as Australia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Northern Ireland. The first International Music and Drama Festival in southern Africa, held in Zimbabwe in December 1994,

21. From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to Bahá'í youth in every land, 10 June 1966; in *Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963–1968* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969), p. 95.

22. From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 23 January 1985.

was hugely successful and promises to become an annual event in the region.

On 26 May 1992, an event called “Live Unity” took place at the venerable Massey Hall in Toronto, Canada. Conceived by Canadian musician and composer Jack Lenz as a celebration of music and entertainment from around the world, it brought together performers of diverse cultures and talents before an audience of approximately 2,000. Singers Seals and Crofts, Dan Seals, and Buffy Sainte-Marie, children’s performers Red Grammer and Douglas John Cameron, East Indian dancer Nova Batticharya, Russian tenor Renat Ibragimov, Brazilian vocalist Flora Purim, Native American dancer Kevin Locke, and Chinese singer Ming Ying Zhu were some of the artists on the program. A “Live Unity” concert for children was given the same day, attracting some 1,200 young people. YTV, a national television network aimed at youth, taped the entire evening concert and aired it numerous times in the following months.

The role of arts in the Bahá’í community was highlighted in November 1992, with the second Bahá’í World Congress in New York City, where music and drama formed a key part of the main program. Dramatic sketches of early Western believers and their encounters with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá moved the 27,000 participants and taught them in memorable fashion about that era of Bahá’í history, as well as about spiritual principles underlying the dramatic pieces. The original music, performed by a 400-voice choir, had precisely the effect on the audience that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá indicated when He said, “if there be love in the heart, through melody, it will increase until its intensity can scarcely be borne....”²³ Drama played a key role in the youth activities held at the Congress, and evening concerts comprising dance, drama, and every musical genre, from classical to jazz to folk to country to rap to gospel, and music drawing upon traditions from various parts of the world, were also featured Congress events.

23. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words to Mrs. Mary L. Lucas, as quoted in “A Brief Account of My Visit to Acca” (Chicago: Bahá’í Publishing Society, 1905), pp. 11–14; cited in “Extracts from the Bahá’í Writings on Music” in *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 79.

Phillip Hinton, one of the actors in the drama that was performed in the main Congress sessions, wrote afterwards of the experience, “I think we all felt that our training, all our skills as artists had been for this unique occasion. We each felt the power that is released when the dramatic arts are harnessed to express the Bahá’í message.”²⁴ He also commented that the event “seemed to represent a shift in thinking, a new attitude on the part of the Bahá’í community towards the arts and artists and the role they must play in the unfoldment of Bahá’u’lláh’s World Commonwealth.”²⁵ This “shift,” as Hinton terms it, is really the fruition of long years of encouragement from Bahá’í institutions.

The Bahá’í International Community has also been active in promoting the arts at NGO Forums connected with major international conferences and summits, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 and the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995. At both gatherings Bahá’ís organized evenings of cultural entertainment that were extremely well received by participants.

1994–95

During 1994–95, the number and range of Bahá’í artistic endeavors in all parts of the world increased markedly. Drama, visual arts, music, and a host of arts events—large and small—were in evidence, as seen in the following survey of highlights.

Drama

‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave great weight to the dramatic arts. He is reported to have said, for example, that “drama is of the utmost importance. It has been a great educational power in the past; it will be so again,”²⁶ and “The stage will be the pulpit of the future.”²⁷ In 1912 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also gave an outline of a play,

24. Phillip Hinton, “Art a gift of the Holy Spirit,” *Herald of the South* (April–June 1993), p. 23.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

26. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, vol. 19, no. 11 (February 1929), p. 341.

27. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, quoted by Loulie Mathews in *The Magazine of the Children of the Kingdom*, vol. 4, no. 3, (June 1923), p. 69.



Scene from the Australian musical drama *The Face of Glory*.

entitled *Drama of the Kingdom*, to Gabrielle Enthoven, a Bahá'í who was interested in drama. This original outline has been developed by several different writers over the years, beginning with Mary Basil Hall whose version was published in 1933. In 1994 an ambitious production, also based on this outline, premiered at the Nexus Theatre, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia, from 30 September to 3 October. Titled *The Face of Glory: A Musical Rendezvous with the Soul*, the original musical work involved a cast of 34 and an off-stage crew of twelve. Featuring 20 original songs by Greg Parker written over a three-year period, the play used symbolism to develop the themes of spiritual awakening, development, and the mystery of martyrdom.

Approximately 1,000 people attended the five performances, and many were profoundly moved by what they saw. As one young man wrote afterwards to the director, "... 'enjoyed it thoroughly' is something that might happen when I have a good meal. It doesn't begin to describe the manner in which experiencing the musical touched me.... If there is a more soul-wrenching experience to be had, I'm not sure I can face it.... I have no doubt that the memory of *The Face of Glory* will become more dear to me than any other."

The drama group In-Theatre also had a number of successes during 1994–95. Taking the experimental play *A Strange Bit of History* by Annabel Knight and Omid Djalili's one-man stand-up comedy show to the 1994 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, they walked away with "The Spirit of the Fringe Award." Reviewers called the first piece "an intelligent and stylish piece of theatre on

an unlikely theme," "a witty and informed production," and "World Class." Of the second they said, "this is a bravura, hilarious, physical performance." The message of the comedy piece, entitled *Short, Fat Kebab-Shop Owner's Son*, is that, in Omid Djalili's words, "it's not what you look like that matters, but an awareness of the reality of Man as 'a mine rich in gems of inestimable value' that will help oppressed individuals to ultimately throw off the stigma of outwardly looking like a short, fat, Iranian kebab-shop owner's son whilst inwardly feeling like Sebastian Flyte from *Brideshead Revisited*." *A Strange Bit of History* parallels the Messianic fever in the West in the mid-nineteenth century with the executions of 20,000 Bábís in the East, "capturing the spirit of the times and making the claim that the Messiah normally associated with the return of Christ did in fact come."

Aside from performing at the Edinburgh Fringe, In-Theatre toured and performed in the Czech and Slovak Republics, the Netherlands, Copenhagen, Prague, Berlin, and Brighton, England, premiering a new piece called *Sweet Dreams on the*



Cast of *The Face of Glory*, produced in October 1994 in Perth, Australia.

Metro in Copenhagen in January and February 1995. This two-person play takes its inspiration from the Peace Statement released by the Universal House of Justice in 1985. Set in a time of "post-calamity," the piece mixes film, dance, and theater to tell of a couple on the underground lines. Omid Djalili also performed his one-man show at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March.

In Trinidad and Tobago, a Bahá'í performing theater company was formally launched at the Creative Arts Center in San

Advertisement for In-Theatre's intriguing drama paralleling the West's nineteenth-century Messianic fever with the persecution of Iran's Bábí community.

Fernando in November 1994. Some 130 people attended, viewing highlights of a performance called *Celebration of Life* and witnessing the premiere of a production entitled *Blendings*.

The Los Angeles Bahá'í Arts Council produced *Prisoners of the Heart* in the fall of 1994, performing it in the Los Angeles area, the Santa Cruz area, and in Sacramento and San Francisco over a period of several months. The play recounts the story of ten Bahá'í women in Shíráz, Iran, who were executed in 1983 for their belief in Bahá'u'lláh. It also deals with issues such as the equality of women and men and freedom of religious expression.

Also in the US, Touchstone Theater produced a one-man play by William George, entitled *The Kingfisher's Wing: The Story of Badí'*, during the fall of 1994. Using puppetry, shadow work, and incorporating humor, the piece tells the story of a young Persian man who journeyed to meet Bahá'u'lláh and was entrusted by Him to act as a messenger for a special tablet to the Shah. George uses allusions to numerous literary sources throughout the play, including the Bible, Shakespeare, Greek tragedy, and twentieth-century poet T.S. Eliot to convey the play's message, "that we are all carrying something. The meaning of sacrifice is that we all have some sort of burden to carry, we are all like Badí', we are no different from him."

In Australia, the Wildfire World Theater ensemble, formed in the late 1980s, continued to perform Bahá'í-inspired dance and drama at home and in other nations throughout the Australasian region. Wildfire has also inspired many other groups to form, including the New Era Singers in Perth, the Farsight in Tasmania, and O.N.E. in Brisbane. In 1994 O.N.E. received an International Year of the Family grant to perform its show promoting the family at several high schools in the area.

A group of 27 Bahá'ís, ranging in age from seven to 45, in Québec, Canada, who call themselves Québecarche devised a multimedia production in French, called *La Promesse ultime* [Ultimate Promise], that was performed in four different cities throughout the province during the summer of 1994. The piece chronicles the quest of a spiritual seeker encountering the various religions revealed progressively throughout history by God's messengers such as Noah, Abraham, and Christ. The search ultimately ends with the seeker's discovery of Bahá'u'lláh. Public reaction to the production was very positive, with one audience member commenting that the presentation was much more than a "show": "It is love and we can feel it, we feel the unity between you."

Visual Arts

The Native Heritage Center in Duncan, British Columbia, Canada, was the venue for "Spiritworks 1995—Art and Belief," a fine arts show that featured the works of 20 visual artists, including sculptors, watercolor and acrylics painters, and a

papermaker, as well as ten performance acts involving a further 30 artists. Workshops and three staged shows were also featured.



The Brilliant Stars Bahá'í children's entertainment group appeared on Perth Channel 7's telethon in Perth, Australia, in October 1994.

“Spiritworks” arose from the monthly forums of a Bahá'í arts institute that seeks, through discussion about the Bahá'í sacred writings on the subject, to develop participants' understanding of the true purpose of art and the role and responsibility of the artist in society.

An art exhibition entitled “Art: An Act of Worship” was opened in October 1994 in Belfast, Northern Ireland, touring throughout a number of towns and cities until December and being viewed by between 500 and 1,000 people during those months. One work was also included in a “Symbols” exhibition, organized by the Cultural Traditions group, which seeks to explore religious, political, and social symbols in Northern Ireland. Also in Northern Ireland, the work of well-known Belfast artist George Fleming, depicting Orange Day processions in Ulster, has encouraged a less prejudiced and more informed look at the Orange Order. Significantly, the exhibition was launched at a college where Roman Catholic priests are trained. Viewers initially attempted to determine whether the artist was Protestant or Catholic, but the program clearly identified him as a member of the Bahá'í Faith attempting to bring understanding to different traditions in the country.

In August, at one of the most important cultural centers in Uruguay, the National Library in Montevideo, the paintings and sculptures of artist Sima Baher went on display. Cosponsored by the Bahá'í community of Uruguay, the Cultural Circle of Literature, and the David Beresnitzky Foundation, the 71-piece exhibition, entitled “The earth is but one country,” was inspired by the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, particularly the statement, “The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.”

Ten thousand people passed through the Taipei City Zoo in Taiwan between 8 and 17 July 1994 to view the First International Children's Art Exhibition, sponsored by the Bahá'í Office of the Environment for Taiwan. The exhibition's main theme, “Our Fragile Environment,” featured 220 children's paintings selected from among 2,250 entries submitted from 38 countries, including the US, Taiwan, Japan, Canada, and various countries in Africa and South America.

Unity was the theme of the fifth Bahá'í art exhibition held during the annual National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa 1–9 July 1994. Three thousand people viewed the paintings, weaving, wood sculpture, and calligraphy contributed by twelve artists. One painting by Reginald Turvey was displayed, as were paintings by the two winners of the Reginald Turvey Art Bursary for 1993 and 1994. One newspaper article noted that the exhibition focused attention on what the artists consider to be “the next phase in the reconstruction of South Africa” and that “the unity of self, family, races, the world, with nature and God, unity in diversity, are represented.” The exhibition was also shown at the National Bahá'í Center in Johannesburg during “Arts Alive” month in September.

Cluj, Romania, was the site of an art exhibition organized by the Association of Amateur Physician-Artists in November 1994, to which a Bahá'í contributed calligraphic renderings of the Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh done in Nasti'aliq style. Each piece also contained a Romanian translation of the text. Displayed in the first room of the gallery, the works were seen by hundreds of people during the month-long event, and two were included in another exhibition the following June in Budapest.

Well-known Bahá'í painter Ashraf Geibatov from Azerbaijan, living in Moscow, visited Luxembourg in the summer of 1994, and the Bahá'í community there was able to organize an exhibition of his work at the Bahá'í Center. Tschingis Aitmatov, former Russian ambassador to Luxembourg and internationally known writer, introduced the painter, lauding him for his work that "perfectly combines Eastern and Western cultures" and mentioning the universal character of the Bahá'í Faith.

In Nuuk (Godthåb), Greenland, the Bahá'í community sponsored an art exhibition called "Nearness Drawing Closer." Held at the National Museum, the show featured works by Canadian artist Gary Berteig and Greenland resident Linda Milne. First-day attendance was 380, and the opening remarks made it clear that the figure of Bahá'u'lláh was the animating force behind the artists' work and the exhibition itself.

Local Bahá'í artists in Portimão, Portugal, contributed paintings and materials to an exhibition on the life of Bahá'u'lláh and on *The Hidden Words*, held in the fall of 1994. More than 3,000 people visited the display.

Seventy-five photos on the theme "The earth is but one country" were exhibited in the library at Bergambacht in the Netherlands during January 1995. The show, arranged by two Bahá'ís, was opened by the mayor and depicted the seasons of the earth, children, people, and external forms of religions.

Music

To musicians, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "singing and music are the spiritual food of the hearts and souls. In this dispensation, music is one of the arts that is highly approved and is considered to be the cause of the exaltation of sad and desponding hearts,"²⁸ while Bahá'u'lláh counselled, "We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realms on high; make it not, therefore, as wings to self and passion."²⁹ Given such statements about the value of this

28. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in "Extracts from the Bahá'í Writings on Music," in *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 74.

29. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 51.

art, it is no surprise that Bahá'í musicians were very active during 1994–95.

The Northern Ireland Bahá'í Choir, for example, went from strength to strength, performing at a variety of venues both for Bahá'í community events and for the public. After a public concert at the Bridewell Arts Center for the Magherafelt Arts Festival in late March 1995, audience members commented, "Come every year to the festival!"

Also in the UK, the London Choir received a special invitation in September to do a performance before an audience of 400 at the Brahma Kumaris Center, marking the International Year of the Family. The following week, the choir also performed at an interfaith festival at Middlesex University, attended by the Dalai Lama.

The Italian youth music group Light in the Darkness took part in a European tour during the summer of 1994, performing at the Regional Bahá'í Youth Conference in Berlin and then visiting Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The group, which has been in existence for a number of years and has performed widely in eastern Europe, this year comprised ten youth from Canada, England, Italy, Poland, Switzerland, and the US.

A Bahá'í-owned music and art management company facilitated the holding of a concert in Thessaloniki, Greece, by violinist Bijan Khadem-Missagh and pianist Walter Delahunt, both Bahá'ís living in Vienna. The concert was filmed by a crew from German National Television for inclusion in a documentary



The Basic Brass quartet, from the Cowichan Valley in British Columbia, Canada, expresses the principles of the Bahá'í Faith through its performances.

on Greece. During the same trip, the two musicians gave another public concert for the benefit of a school for handicapped children, under the sponsorship of the Greek Bahá'í community and in honor of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Bahá'í Faith.

In Norway, *The Carmel Eulogies*, a symphony by Norwegian composer and Bahá'í Lasse Thoresen, premiered in Oslo on 10 November, with a repeat performance the following day. Commissioned by the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra on the occasion of its 75th jubilee, the symphony consists of two parts, "Fragrances of Mercy" and "Circumambulations." The rhythm of "Alláh'u'Abhá" ("God the All-Glorious") is inherent in the work, which is based on the Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Carmel. The symphony was critically acclaimed, and many members of the audience were visibly moved during the performance. It was broadcast live on national radio and taped for later airing on the national television network.

In October two Bahá'í musicians, cellist Lev Evgrafov and

As part of a two-year tour of South America, Millero Congo, playing Afro-Caribbean music based on the rhythmic interplay of drums, visited Valle and Cauca, Colombia, where they gave fourteen concerts in December 1994.



vocalist Minoo Falahi, joined the Perm Philharmonic Orchestra in Russia in a celebration of the International Day of Music. The recital of classical music was performed before an audience of approximately 700, while the local television station aired the entire concert. Particularly well received was a lullaby composed by Alfredo Speranza, an Italian Bahá'í pianist and composer,

entitled "Viens, mon enfant" in which a mother sings to her child to come to pray to Bahá'u'lláh, a beautiful Sun that will shine on her to make her full of joy and happiness.

The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, was the venue for a solo piano recital in September 1994 by Chris Keller, a Bahá'í musician living in the area. The program included original compositions, jazz standards, and one piece that incorporated passages from the Bahá'í sacred writings. Ms. Keller has also been awarded a grant by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities to organize a "Jazz for Peace" concert.

El Viento Canta, which has toured Europe, Africa, and Asia playing traditional South American music with a Bahá'í message, gave several concerts in South and North Dakota during August. The group also sang at the Annual Wakpala Celebration and three powwows while they were in the area.

The Honduran folk music group Wind was invited by the Bahá'í community to perform and present the Bahá'í Faith through music at three different universities in the country. All were highly successful.

In Tasmania, Australia, two Bahá'í musicians from Melbourne gave a series of performances entitled "Tribute to Bahá'u'lláh." The three concerts, in Hobart, Clarence, and Launceston, featured quotations from the Bahá'í writings set to music. A newly-formed dance group in Tasmania, called The Farsight, was also active, performing in high schools and at Human Rights Day activities.³⁰

July saw the official release of the double compact disc set of the music of the second Bahá'í World Congress. A special celebration in Toronto, Canada, marked the event. The music was composed by a number of individuals, including Jack Lenz, Tom Price, Jim Seals, and Graham Major Barr. It represents a broad range of influences, including modern classical, North American gospel, and Persian classical, and was composed in

30. Many other Bahá'í youth dance groups, known as Youth Workshops, have formed around the world. For a more detailed look at some of these, see pp.172-177.

praise of Bahá'u'lláh on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of His passing. First performed in New York in November 1992, the music was recorded the following October in Russia, with the Mila Moscow Orchestra, by choir members from ten countries.

Arts Events

A Bahá'í creative writers' group in Ottawa, Canada, met monthly and also sponsored a monthly Arts Night, involving visual artists, singers, and musicians as well as members of the writing group. In Dallas, Texas, a similar venture, called "Arts Afire," sponsored a Race Unity Day event at the Dallas Bahá'í Center, including visual art, cultural exhibits, a reception, and a program of music, drama, dance, and short talks about the contribution of art to the appreciation of diversity.

The Australian Bahá'í community sponsored two youth who took part in an international conference for young playwrights called "Interplay," held in Townsville, Australia in July 1994. The conference brought together 42 young people from 21 countries. Jemma Bradley's play, *Dare to Tango*, explored the theme of equality through the eyes of a group of men and women who work in a café. June Perkins' play, *Immigrant Mother*, looked at the issues of racism and family relationships by telling the story of a new immigrant to Australia. Ms. Perkins also presented a paper for a forum on indigenous drama on "Unity in Diversity: A Regional Drama of the Pacific."

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South Africa established a Bahá'í association for the arts, called "Arts for Unity," in 1994. It invited the participation of artists and craftspeople of all descriptions, with the goal of contributing towards unity in South Africa.

Two major arts events took place in Zimbabwe during the year. The first was a national music and drama congress, held 12–14 August in Mhondoro, with approximately 200 attending. Music and drama groups from all over the country participated, with the drama group from Murewa and the Epworth children's choir winning in their respective categories. Choirs were required to sing two songs, one for a funeral and a second selection on any theme. Most of the songs were original. Zimbabwe's second

major event ran from 26 to 31 December, when approximately 700 people from 30 different countries gathered in Harare for the Zimbabwe Bahá'í International Summer School and Music and Drama Festival. In the music competition of that event, a group called Voice of the Youth, from Bulawayo, walked away with the first prize, the Murewa Choir came second, and the Epworth Choir came third. All three winners are from Zimbabwe. In the drama category, Africa Awake from Malawi carried away top

Voice of the Youth, from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, won the music competition at the Zimbabwe International Music and Drama Festival, December 1994.



Africa Awake from Malawi took first place in the drama competition at the International Music and Drama Festival held in Zimbabwe, December 1994.

honors, Botswana came second, and Namibia was third.

Kenya hosted a national contest in 1994, with the final stage held 20–21 August in Nakuru. Thirty-six teams participated in four categories of competition: music, poetry, drama, and

memorization of passages from the Bahá'í writings. The Lutali community in Kakamega won first prize for drama and memorization, the Binyeny community of Bungoma won the poetry prize, and a team from the Kisumu community won for music.

In Zaire, approximately 2,500 youth gathered in Mboko City, South Kivu, in April 1995 to attend the country's fourth annual Bahá'í music festival. The theme was "Youth Can Move the World," and about 40 groups sang songs, danced, performed skits, and read poetry inspired by the message of Bahá'u'lláh.

The Landegg Academy in Switzerland hosted several significant arts events during the year. One hundred and ten people from fifteen countries gathered there 18–22 November for the institution's fourth annual Music Forum. Bijan Khadem-Missagh acted as artistic director of the Forum, which included public concerts, spontaneous performances by participating musicians, and workshops on subjects such as composition, the influence of African music, dances of the world, and improvisation and the role of music in the corporate world. Other highlights included addresses by best-selling author Dr. John Diamond, who challenged participants with his unique music methodologies, and by Dr. Susanne Schaup, German author, who spoke on "Music Without Boundaries." The Landegg Music Forum Choir also held its first rehearsals during the gathering, under the direction of Norwegian composer Lasse Thoresen and baritone Johan Walström. Just over a month later, Landegg hosted a conference on "The Role of the Aesthetic in a Global Society," which brought together more than 100 people from 20 countries. The keynote address for the event, the overall theme of which was "Art, the Artist, and Unity," was given by Otto Donald Rogers. Other speakers and performers included artist and writer Anne Gordon Perry, dramatist and puppeteer Bill George, Native American dancers Kevin and Kimimila Locke, and pianist Mark Ochu, all of the US, as well as dancer Arlette George of Scotland, guitarist Conrad Lambert of England, and actor Omid Djalili.

A music institute on Tanna Island, Vanuatu, in the South Pacific, drew together about 20 Bahá'í youth from seven dif-



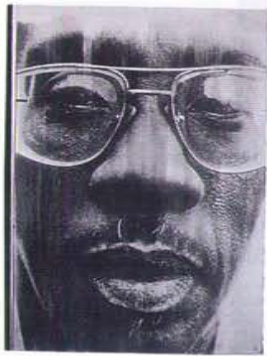
Participants in an eight-day music institute on Tanna Island, Vanuatu, in January 1995, studied Bahá'í writings together, set passages from them to traditional music, and learned how to play the guitar.

ferent communities for eight days at the end of January. The program consisted of study classes on the Bahá'í sacred writings, sessions to work on the composition of melodies for passages from the writings using traditional styles of music as well as to learn existing songs, and lessons in guitar playing. In the evenings, participants joined in social activities and were able to share what they were learning with members of the Bahá'í community and the public.

In Sri Lanka, a three-day music and drama program held 7–9 April 1995 featured a modern Oriental dance on the theme of peace and unity as well as drama and music. The previous August, Colombo's young people produced a drama about Ṭāhīrih for a meeting commemorating her life.

Awards and Achievements

The Australian Bahá'í Business and Professional Association has established an annual achievement award to recognize individuals who achieve excellence in their business or profession. The award for 1993, presented to the recipient at a brief ceremony at the Sydney Bahá'í House of Worship on 29 May 1994, went to well-known Aboriginal artist Lorni Hyland, whose work has been exhibited throughout Australia, including at Bahá'í events and, notably, in a show at Parliament House in Canberra. A banner designed by her was shown at the second Bahá'í World Congress in New York in 1992.



Images from Donald Camp's award-winning collection, "Dust Shaped Hearts," conceived to honor African American men.

Donald Camp, a conceptual and experimental photographer from Philadelphia, US, was named a Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation—the fifth African American male visual artist to be granted this fellowship in its 71-year history. He was also awarded a 1994 Fellowship in the Arts and was appointed Visiting Artist to the American Academy in Rome by the Pew Charitable Foundation. The work for which Mr. Camp received the Guggenheim Fellowship is titled "Dust Shaped Hearts," in honor of poet Robert Hayden's first collection, *Heart Shape in the Dust*. Conceived to honor African American men, the work consists of full faces printed in light-sensitized earth pigments and casein on lithographic paper, a process reclaimed from a nineteenth century photographic process and enhanced by Mr. Camp. Of this exhibition, the photographer has stated, "I'm often asked...why I don't do women or people who are not African American or men. The public image of black men is very different. I want to make prints that dance between the public and the personal images of self. The prints evoke a mystery and enigma that I hope will disappear over time. Not that I hope the modesty of the prints will fade but that the present fear and distrust of the men will end. What I hope remains are the reflections of modesty, humility, nobility, and perhaps the struggle that is evident in the faces I've chosen. I wish them to be '...indicative of both the light

of reunion and the fire of separation."³¹

An arts endowment in memory of Gwen Wakeling Staudigl has been given to the Bosch Bahá'í School in Santa Cruz, California, US, to promote education, development, production, exhibition, and performance in various fields of artistic endeavor. The endowment, a gift of her husband Henry J. Staudigl shortly before his passing last year, also includes a research and resource library. Henry Staudigl was a prolific film critic, as well as a writer and director for motion pictures, radio, television and stage productions. Gwen Wakeling was a versatile and creative costume designer, winning an Academy Award in 1950 for best costume design for Cecil B. DeMille's *Samson and Delilah*.

Architecture

An architecture exhibit entitled "New Architecture for a New World" was held in the cultural center of Debrecen, Hungary, in late April 1994, attracting some 1,500 visitors over a ten-day period. Photographs and posters of Bahá'í Houses of Worship around the world and holy places at the Bahá'í World Centre in Israel were displayed in 24 frame panels set up as a nine-pointed star. The success of the exhibit led to further showings at universities, museums, and cultural centers throughout Hungary.

Looking toward the Future

In his essay "Aesthetics and Spiritual Education," Glen Eyford has characterized and analyzed the world in which we live at present as follows:

Man is challenged to dedicate himself to 'the emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture....' Because he was made in God's image, man constantly strives to create order from chaos, to find meaning and purpose, to discover harmony, unity, and beauty. The instinctive tendency operates in both the creation and the appreciation of the arts, and, through intimate interaction with the creative word of God it

31. The passage cited is from Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), p. 176.

can be channeled to assist in the building of a new world order.³²

Such a perspective is not fashionable in contemporary artistic circles. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement that "It is natural for the heart and spirit to take pleasure and enjoyment in all things that show forth symmetry, harmony, and perfection"³³ does not find much resonance in the late twentieth century arts world, which tends to focus on expressions of dissonance, disharmony, incongruities, shapelessness, randomness, triviality, and/or ugliness. And who can blame artists, if their view is limited to what they see immediately around them? It is because Bahá'u'lláh has given Bahá'ís a vision of oneness that they feel impelled to transcend current views and trends and work out the expression of that vision through their artistic pursuits, at whatever level they may be able to do so.

Mark Tobey once wrote, "Of course we talk about international styles today, but I think later on we'll talk about universal styles...the future of the world must be this realization of its oneness, which is the basic teaching as I understand it in the Bahá'í Faith, and from that oneness, will naturally develop a new spirit in art, because that's what it is. It's a spirit and it's not new words and it's not new ideas only."³⁴ The healthy development of the arts in the Bahá'í world community is ample evidence that such a new spirit in art is in the process of formulating itself.

32. Glen A. Eyford, "Aesthetics and Spiritual Education," in *World Order* (Fall 1979), pp. 48–49. Cited passage from Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters*, 2d. rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 163.

33. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words to Mrs. Mary L. Lucas, as quoted in "A Brief Account of My Visit to Acca," pp. 11–14; cited in "Extracts from the Bahá'í Writings on Music," in *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2, p. 78.

34. Cited by Arthur Dahl in "The Fragrance of Spirituality: An Appreciation of the Art of Mark Tobey," in *The Bahá'í World: An International Record*, vol. 16 (1963–76), p. 644.

The following statement by the Bahá'í International Community Office of Public Information was sent to all National Spiritual Assemblies 23 January 1995. It was prepared to facilitate greater understanding of the concept of global prosperity in the context of Bahá'í teachings.

THE PROSPERITY OF HUMANKIND

To an extent unimaginable a decade ago, the ideal of world peace is taking on form and substance. Obstacles that long seemed immovable have collapsed in humanity's path; apparently irreconcilable conflicts have begun to surrender to processes of consultation and resolution; a willingness to counter military aggression through unified international action is emerging. The effect has been to awaken in both the masses of humanity and many world leaders a degree of hopefulness about the future of our planet that had been nearly extinguished.

Throughout the world, immense intellectual and spiritual energies are seeking expression, energies whose gathering pressure is in direct proportion to the frustrations of recent decades. Everywhere the signs multiply that the earth's peoples yearn for an end to conflict and to the suffering and ruin from which no land is any longer immune. These rising impulses for change must be seized upon and channeled into overcoming the remaining barriers that block realization of the age-old dream of global peace. The effort of will required for such a task cannot be summoned up merely by appeals for action against the countless ills afflicting society. It must be galvanized by a vision of human prosperity in

the fullest sense of the term—an awakening to the possibilities of the spiritual and material well-being now brought within grasp. Its beneficiaries must be all of the planet's inhabitants, without distinction, without the imposition of conditions unrelated to the fundamental goals of such a reorganization of human affairs.

History has thus far recorded principally the experience of tribes, cultures, classes, and nations. With the physical unification of the planet in this century and acknowledgement of the interdependence of all who live on it, the history of humanity as one people is now beginning. The long, slow civilizing of human character has been a sporadic development, uneven and admittedly inequitable in the material advantages it has conferred. Nevertheless, endowed with the wealth of all the genetic and cultural diversity that has evolved through past ages, the earth's inhabitants are now challenged to draw on their collective inheritance to take up, consciously and systematically, the responsibility for the design of their future.

It is unrealistic to imagine that the vision of the next stage in the advancement of civilization can be formulated without a searching reexamination of the attitudes and assumptions that currently underlie approaches to social and economic development. At the most obvious level, such rethinking will have to address practical matters of policy, resource utilization, planning procedures, implementation methodologies, and organization. As it proceeds, however, fundamental issues will quickly emerge, related to the long-term goals to be pursued, the social structures required, the implications for development of principles of social justice, and the nature and role of knowledge in effecting enduring change. Indeed, such a reexamination will be driven to seek a broad consensus of understanding about human nature itself.

Two avenues of discussion open directly onto all of these issues, whether conceptual or practical, and it is along these two avenues that we wish to explore, in the pages that follow, the subject of a strategy of global development. The first is prevailing beliefs about the nature and purpose of the development process; the second is the roles assigned in it to the various protagonists.

The assumptions directing most of current development planning are essentially materialistic. That is to say, the purpose of development is defined in terms of the successful cultivation in

all societies of those means for the achievement of material prosperity that have, through trial and error, already come to characterize certain regions of the world. Modifications in development discourse do indeed occur, accommodating differences of culture and political system and responding to the alarming dangers posed by environmental degradation. Yet the underlying materialistic assumptions remain essentially unchallenged.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, it is no longer possible to maintain the belief that the approach to social and economic development to which the materialistic conception of life has given rise is capable of meeting humanity's needs. Optimistic forecasts about the changes it would generate have vanished into the ever-widening abyss that separates the living standards of a small and relatively diminishing minority of the world's inhabitants from the poverty experienced by the vast majority of the globe's population.

This unprecedented economic crisis, together with the social breakdown it has helped to engender, reflects a profound error of conception about human nature itself. For the levels of response elicited from human beings by the incentives of the prevailing order are not only inadequate, but seem almost irrelevant in the face of world events. We are being shown that, unless the development of society finds a purpose beyond the mere amelioration of material conditions, it will fail of attaining even these goals. That purpose must be sought in spiritual dimensions of life and motivation that transcend a constantly changing economic landscape and an artificially imposed division of human societies into "developed" and "developing."

As the purpose of development is being redefined, it will become necessary also to look again at assumptions about the appropriate roles to be played by the protagonists in the process. The crucial role of government, at whatever level, requires no elaboration. Future generations, however, will find almost incomprehensible the circumstance that, in an age paying tribute to an egalitarian philosophy and related democratic principles, development planning should view the masses of humanity as essentially recipients of benefits from aid and training. Despite acknowledgement of participation as a principle, the scope of the decision making left to most of the world's population is at best

secondary, limited to a range of choices formulated by agencies inaccessible to them and determined by goals that are often irreconcilable with their perceptions of reality.

This approach is even endorsed, implicitly if not explicitly, by established religion. Burdened by traditions of paternalism, prevailing religious thought seems incapable of translating an expressed faith in the spiritual dimensions of human nature into confidence in humanity's collective capacity to transcend material conditions.

Such an attitude misses the significance of what is likely the most important social phenomenon of our time. If it is true that the governments of the world are striving through the medium of the United Nations system to construct a new global order, it is equally true that the peoples of the world are galvanized by this same vision. Their response has taken the form of a sudden efflorescence of countless movements and organizations of social change at local, regional, and international levels. Human rights, the advance of women, the social requirements of sustainable economic development, the overcoming of prejudices, the moral education of children, literacy, primary health care, and a host of other vital concerns each commands the urgent advocacy of organizations supported by growing numbers in every part of the globe.

This response of the world's people themselves to the crying needs of the age echoes the call that Bahá'u'lláh raised over a hundred years ago: "Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements." The transformation in the way that great numbers of ordinary people are coming to see themselves—a change that is dramatically abrupt in the perspective of the history of civilization—raises fundamental questions about the role assigned to the general body of humanity in the planning of our planet's future.

I

The bedrock of a strategy that can engage the world's population in assuming responsibility for its collective destiny must be the consciousness of the oneness of humankind. Deceptively simple in popular discourse, the concept that humanity

constitutes a single people presents fundamental challenges to the way that most of the institutions of contemporary society carry out their functions. Whether in the form of the adversarial structure of civil government, the advocacy principle informing most of civil law, a glorification of the struggle between classes and other social groups, or the competitive spirit dominating so much of modern life, conflict is accepted as the mainspring of human interaction. It represents yet another expression in social organization of the materialistic interpretation of life that has progressively consolidated itself over the past two centuries.

In a letter addressed to Queen Victoria over a century ago, and employing an analogy that points to the one model holding convincing promise for the organization of a planetary society, Bahá'u'lláh compared the world to the human body. There is, indeed, no other model in phenomenal existence to which we can reasonably look. Human society is composed not of a mass of merely differentiated cells but of associations of individuals, each one of whom is endowed with intelligence and will; nevertheless, the modes of operation that characterize man's biological nature illustrate fundamental principles of existence. Chief among these is that of unity in diversity. Paradoxically, it is precisely the wholeness and complexity of the order constituting the human body—and the perfect integration into it of the body's cells—that permit the full realization of the distinctive capacities inherent in each of these component elements. No cell lives apart from the body, whether in contributing to its functioning or in deriving its share from the well-being of the whole. The physical well-being thus achieved finds its purpose in making possible the expression of human consciousness; that is to say, the purpose of biological development transcends the mere existence of the body and its parts.

What is true of the life of the individual has its parallels in human society. The human species is an organic whole, the leading edge of the evolutionary process. That human consciousness necessarily operates through an infinite diversity of individual minds and motivations detracts in no way from its essential unity. Indeed, it is precisely an inhering diversity that distinguishes unity from homogeneity or uniformity. What the peoples of the world are today experiencing, Bahá'u'lláh said, is

their collective coming-of-age, and it is through this emerging maturity of the race that the principle of unity in diversity will find full expression. From its earliest beginnings in the consolidation of family life, the process of social organization has successively moved from the simple structures of clan and tribe, through multitudinous forms of urban society, to the eventual emergence of the nation-state, each stage opening up a wealth of new opportunities for the exercise of human capacity.

Clearly, the advancement of the race has not occurred at the expense of human individuality. As social organization has increased, the scope for the expression of the capacities latent in each human being has correspondingly expanded. Because the relationship between the individual and society is a reciprocal one, the transformation now required must occur simultaneously within human consciousness and the structure of social institutions. It is in the opportunities afforded by this twofold process of change that a strategy of global development will find its purpose. At this crucial stage of history, that purpose must be to establish enduring foundations on which planetary civilization can gradually take shape.

Laying the groundwork for global civilization calls for the creation of laws and institutions that are universal in both character and authority. The effort can begin only when the concept of the oneness of humanity has been wholeheartedly embraced by those in whose hands the responsibility for decision making rests, and when the related principles are propagated through both educational systems and the media of mass communication. Once this threshold is crossed, a process will have been set in motion through which the peoples of the world can be drawn into the task of formulating common goals and committing themselves to their attainment. Only so fundamental a reorientation can protect them, too, from the age-old demons of ethnic and religious strife. Only through the dawning consciousness that they constitute a single people will the inhabitants of the planet be enabled to turn away from the patterns of conflict that have dominated social organization in the past and begin to learn the ways of collaboration and conciliation. "The well-being of mankind," Bahá'u'lláh writes, "its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established."

Justice is the one power that can translate the dawning consciousness of humanity's oneness into a collective will through which the necessary structures of global community life can be confidently erected. An age that sees the people of the world increasingly gaining access to information of every kind and to a diversity of ideas will find justice asserting itself as the ruling principle of successful social organization. With ever greater frequency, proposals aiming at the development of the planet will have to submit to the candid light of the standards it requires.

At the individual level, justice is that faculty of the human soul that enables each person to distinguish truth from falsehood. In the sight of God, Bahá'u'lláh avers, justice is "the best beloved of all things" since it permits each individual to see with his own eyes rather than the eyes of others, to know through his own knowledge rather than the knowledge of his neighbor or his group. It calls for fair-mindedness in one's judgments, for equity in one's treatment of others, and is thus a constant if demanding companion in the daily occasions of life.

At the group level, a concern for justice is the indispensable compass in collective decision making, because it is the only means by which unity of thought and action can be achieved. Far from encouraging the punitive spirit that has often masqueraded under its name in past ages, justice is the practical expression of awareness that, in the achievement of human progress, the interests of the individual and those of society are inextricably linked. To the extent that justice becomes a guiding concern of human interaction, a consultative climate is encouraged that permits options to be examined dispassionately and appropriate courses of action selected. In such a climate the perennial tendencies toward manipulation and partisanship are far less likely to deflect the decision-making process.

The implications for social and economic development are profound. Concern for justice protects the task of defining progress from the temptation to sacrifice the well-being of the generality of humankind—and even of the planet itself—to the advantages which technological breakthroughs can make available to privileged minorities. In design and planning, it

ensures that limited resources are not diverted to the pursuit of projects extraneous to a community's essential social or economic priorities. Above all, only development programs that are perceived as meeting their needs and as being just and equitable in objective can hope to engage the commitment of the masses of humanity, upon whom implementation depends. The relevant human qualities such as honesty, a willingness to work, and a spirit of cooperation are successfully harnessed to the accomplishment of enormously demanding collective goals when every member of society—indeed every component group within society—can trust that they are protected by standards and assured of benefits that apply equally to all.

At the heart of the discussion of a strategy of social and economic development, therefore, lies the issue of human rights. The shaping of such a strategy calls for the promotion of human rights to be freed from the grip of the false dichotomies that have for so long held it hostage. Concern that each human being should enjoy the freedom of thought and action conducive to his or her personal growth does not justify devotion to the cult of individualism that so deeply corrupts many areas of contemporary life. Nor does concern to ensure the welfare of society as a whole require a deification of the state as the supposed source of humanity's well-being. Far otherwise: the history of the present century shows all too clearly that such ideologies and the partisan agendas to which they give rise have been themselves the principal enemies of the interests they purport to serve. Only in a consultative framework made possible by the consciousness of the organic unity of humankind can all aspects of the concern for human rights find legitimate and creative expression.

Today, the agency on whom has devolved the task of creating this framework and of liberating the promotion of human rights from those who would exploit it is the system of international institutions born out of the tragedies of two ruinous world wars and the experience of worldwide economic breakdown. Significantly, the term "human rights" has come into general use only since the promulgation of the United Nations Charter in 1945 and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights three years later. In these history-making documents, formal recognition has been given to respect for social justice as a

correlative of the establishment of world peace. The fact that the Declaration passed without a dissenting vote in the General Assembly conferred on it from the outset an authority that has grown steadily in the intervening years.

The activity most intimately linked to the consciousness that distinguishes human nature is the individual's exploration of reality for himself or herself. The freedom to investigate the purpose of existence and to develop the endowments of human nature that make it achievable requires protection. Human beings must be free to know. That such freedom is often abused and such abuse grossly encouraged by features of contemporary society does not detract in any degree from the validity of the impulse itself.

It is this distinguishing impulse of human consciousness that provides the moral imperative for the enunciation of many of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration and the related Covenants. Universal education, freedom of movement, access to information, and the opportunity to participate in political life are all aspects of its operation that require explicit guarantee by the international community. The same is true of freedom of thought and belief, including religious liberty, along with the right to hold opinions and express these opinions appropriately.

Since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the race is born into the world as a trust of the whole. This trusteeship constitutes the moral foundation of most of the other rights—principally economic and social—which the instruments of the United Nations are attempting similarly to define. The security of the family and the home, the ownership of property, and the right to privacy are all implied in such a trusteeship. The obligations on the part of the community extend to the provision of employment, mental and physical health care, social security, fair wages, rest and recreation, and a host of other reasonable expectations on the part of the individual members of society.

The principle of collective trusteeship creates also the right of every person to expect that those cultural conditions essential to his or her identity enjoy the protection of national and international law. Much like the role played by the gene pool in the biological life of humankind and its environment, the immense

wealth of cultural diversity achieved over thousands of years is vital to the social and economic development of a human race experiencing its collective coming-of-age. It represents a heritage that must be permitted to bear its fruit in a global civilization. On the one hand, cultural expressions need to be protected from suffocation by the materialistic influences currently holding sway. On the other, cultures must be enabled to interact with one another in ever-changing patterns of civilization, free of manipulation for partisan political ends.

“The light of men,” Bahá’u’lláh says, “is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significance.”

III

In order for the standard of human rights now in the process of formulation by the community of nations to be promoted and established as prevailing international norms, a fundamental redefinition of human relationships is called for. Present-day conceptions of what is natural and appropriate in relationships—among human beings themselves, between human beings and nature, between the individual and society, and between the members of society and its institutions—reflect levels of understanding arrived at by the human race during earlier and less mature stages in its development. If humanity is indeed coming of age, if all the inhabitants of the planet constitute a single people, if justice is to be the ruling principle of social organization—then existing conceptions that were born out of ignorance of these emerging realities have to be recast.

Movement in this direction has barely begun. It will lead, as it unfolds, to a new understanding of the nature of the family and of the rights and responsibilities of each of its members. It will entirely transform the role of women at every level of society. Its effect in reordering people’s relation to the work they do and their understanding of the place of economic activity in their lives will be sweeping. It will bring about far-reaching changes in the governance of human affairs and in the institutions created to carry it out. Through its influence, the work of society’s

rapidly proliferating non-governmental organizations will be increasingly rationalized. It will ensure the creation of binding legislation that will protect both the environment and the development needs of all peoples. Ultimately, the restructuring or transformation of the United Nations system that this movement is already bringing about will no doubt lead to the establishment of a world federation of nations with its own legislative, judicial, and executive bodies.

Central to the task of reconceptualizing the system of human relationships is the process that Bahá’u’lláh refers to as consultation. “In all things it is necessary to consult,” is His advice. “The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.”

The standard of truth seeking this process demands is far beyond the patterns of negotiation and compromise that tend to characterize the present-day discussion of human affairs. It cannot be achieved—indeed, its attainment is severely handicapped—by the culture of protest that is another widely prevailing feature of contemporary society. Debate, propaganda, the adversarial method, the entire apparatus of partisanship that have long been such familiar features of collective action are all fundamentally harmful to its purpose: that is, arriving at a consensus about the truth of a given situation and the wisest choice of action among the options open at any given moment.

What Bahá’u’lláh is calling for is a consultative process in which the individual participants strive to transcend their respective points of view, in order to function as members of a body with its own interests and goals. In such an atmosphere, characterized by both candor and courtesy, ideas belong not to the individual to whom they occur during the discussion but to the group as a whole, to take up, discard, or revise as seems to best serve the goal pursued. Consultation succeeds to the extent that all participants support the decisions arrived at, regardless of the individual opinions with which they entered the discussion. Under such circumstances an earlier decision can be readily reconsidered if experience exposes any shortcomings.

Viewed in such a light, consultation is the operating expression of justice in human affairs. So vital is it to the success of collective endeavor that it must constitute a basic feature of a viable

strategy of social and economic development. Indeed, the participation of the people on whose commitment and efforts the success of such a strategy depends becomes effective only as consultation is made the organizing principle of every project. "No man can attain his true station," is Bahá'u'lláh's counsel, "except through his justice. No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation."

IV

The tasks entailed in the development of a global society call for levels of capacity far beyond anything the human race has so far been able to muster. Reaching these levels will require an enormous expansion in access to knowledge, on the part of individuals and social organizations alike. Universal education will be an indispensable contributor to this process of capacity building, but the effort will succeed only as human affairs are so reorganized as to enable both individuals and groups in every sector of society to acquire knowledge and apply it to the shaping of human affairs.

Throughout recorded history, human consciousness has depended upon two basic knowledge systems through which its potentialities have progressively been expressed: science and religion. Through these two agencies, the race's experience has been organized, its environment interpreted, its latent powers explored, and its moral and intellectual life disciplined. They have acted as the real progenitors of civilization. With the benefit of hindsight, it is evident, moreover, that the effectiveness of this dual structure has been greatest during those periods when, each in its own sphere, religion and science were able to work in concert.

Given the almost universal respect in which science is currently held, its credentials need no elaboration. In the context of a strategy of social and economic development, the issue rather is how scientific and technological activity is to be organized. If the work involved is viewed chiefly as the preserve of established elites living in a small number of nations, it is obvious that the enormous gap which such an arrangement has already created between the world's rich and poor will only continue to

widen, with the disastrous consequences for the world's economy already noted. Indeed, if most of humankind continue to be regarded mainly as users of products of science and technology created elsewhere, then programs ostensibly designed to serve their needs cannot properly be termed "development."

A central challenge, therefore—and an enormous one—is the expansion of scientific and technological activity. Instruments of social and economic change so powerful must cease to be the patrimony of advantaged segments of society, and must be so organized as to permit people everywhere to participate in such activity on the basis of capacity. Apart from the creation of programs that make the required education available to all who are able to benefit from it, such reorganization will require the establishment of viable centers of learning throughout the world, institutions that will enhance the capability of the world's peoples to participate in the generation and application of knowledge. Development strategy, while acknowledging the wide differences of individual capacity, must take as a major goal the task of making it possible for all of the earth's inhabitants to approach on an equal basis the processes of science and technology which are their common birthright. Familiar arguments for maintaining the status quo grow daily less compelling as the accelerating revolution in communication technologies now brings information and training within reach of vast numbers of people around the globe, wherever they may be, whatever their cultural backgrounds.

The challenges facing humanity in its religious life, if different in character, are equally daunting. For the vast majority of the world's population, the idea that human nature has a spiritual dimension—indeed that its fundamental identity is spiritual—is a truth requiring no demonstration. It is a perception of reality that can be discovered in the earliest records of civilization and that has been cultivated for several millenia by every one of the great religious traditions of humanity's past. Its enduring achievements in law, the fine arts, and the civilizing of human intercourse are what give substance and meaning to history. In one form or another its promptings are a daily influence in the lives of most people on earth and, as events around the world today dramatically show, the longings it awakens are both inextinguishable and incalculably potent.

It would seem obvious, therefore, that efforts of any kind to promote human progress must seek to tap capacities so universal and so immensely creative. Why, then, have spiritual issues facing humanity not been central to the development discourse? Why have most of the priorities—indeed most of the underlying assumptions—of the international development agenda been determined so far by materialistic world views to which only small minorities of the earth's population subscribe? How much weight can be placed on a professed devotion to the principle of universal participation that denies the validity of the participants' defining cultural experience?

It may be argued that, since spiritual and moral issues have historically been bound up with contending theological doctrines which are not susceptible of objective proof, these issues lie outside the framework of the international community's development concerns. To accord them any significant role would be to open the door to precisely those dogmatic influences that have nurtured social conflict and blocked human progress. There is doubtless a measure of truth in such an argument. Exponents of the world's various theological systems bear a heavy responsibility not only for the disrepute into which faith itself has fallen among many progressive thinkers, but for the inhibitions and distortions produced in humanity's continuing discourse on spiritual meaning. To conclude, however, that the answer lies in discouraging the investigation of spiritual reality and ignoring the deepest roots of human motivation is a self-evident delusion. The sole effect, to the degree that such censorship has been achieved in recent history, has been to deliver the shaping of humanity's future into the hands of a new orthodoxy, one which argues that truth is amoral and facts are independent of values.

So far as earthly existence is concerned, many of the greatest achievements of religion have been moral in character. Through its teachings and through the examples of human lives illumined by these teachings, masses of people in all ages and lands have developed the capacity to love. They have learned to discipline the animal side of their natures, to make great sacrifices for the common good, to practise forgiveness, generosity, and trust, to use wealth and other resources in ways that serve the advancement of civilization. Institutional systems have been devised to

translate these moral advances into the norms of social life on a vast scale. However obscured by dogmatic accretions and diverted by sectarian conflict, the spiritual impulses set in motion by such transcendent figures as Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Muḥammad have been the chief influence in the civilizing of human character.

Since, then, the challenge is the empowerment of humankind through a vast increase in access to knowledge, the strategy that can make this possible must be constructed around an ongoing and intensifying dialogue between science and religion. It is—or by now should be—a truism that, in every sphere of human activity and at every level, the insights and skills that represent scientific accomplishment must look to the force of spiritual commitment and moral principle to ensure their appropriate application. People need, for example, to learn how to separate fact from conjecture—indeed to distinguish between subjective views and objective reality; the extent to which individuals and institutions so equipped can contribute to human progress, however, will be determined by their devotion to truth and their detachment from the promptings of their own interests and passions. Another capacity that science must cultivate in all people is that of thinking in terms of process, including historical process; however, if this intellectual advancement is to contribute ultimately to promoting development, its perspective must be unclouded by prejudices of race, culture, sex, or sectarian belief. Similarly, the training that can make it possible for the earth's inhabitants to participate in the production of wealth will advance the aims of development only to the extent that such an impulse is illumined by the spiritual insight that service to humankind is the purpose of both individual life and social organization.

V

It is in the context of raising the level of human capacity through the expansion of knowledge at all levels that the economic issues facing humankind need to be addressed. As the experience of recent decades has demonstrated, material benefits and endeavors cannot be regarded as ends in themselves. Their value consists not only in providing for humanity's basic needs in housing, food, health care, and the like, but in extending the

reach of human abilities. The most important role that economic efforts must play in development lies, therefore, in equipping people and institutions with the means through which they can achieve the real purpose of development: that is, laying foundations for a new social order that can cultivate the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness.

The challenge to economic thinking is to accept unambiguously this purpose of development—and its own role in fostering creation of the means to achieve it. Only in this way can economics and the related sciences free themselves from the undertow of the materialistic preoccupations that now distract them, and fulfill their potential as tools vital to achieving human well-being in the full sense of the term. Nowhere is the need for a rigorous dialogue between the work of science and the insights of religion more apparent.

The problem of poverty is a case in point. Proposals aimed at addressing it are predicated on the conviction that material resources exist, or can be created by scientific and technological endeavor, which will alleviate and eventually entirely eradicate this age-old condition as a feature of human life. A major reason why such relief is not achieved is that the necessary scientific and technological advances respond to a set of priorities only tangentially related to the real interests of the generality of humankind. A radical reordering of these priorities will be required if the burden of poverty is finally to be lifted from the world. Such an achievement demands a determined quest for appropriate values, a quest that will test profoundly both the spiritual and scientific resources of humankind. Religion will be severely hampered in contributing to this joint undertaking so long as it is held prisoner by sectarian doctrines which cannot distinguish between contentment and mere passivity and which teach that poverty is an inherent feature of earthly life, escape from which lies only in the world beyond. To participate effectively in the struggle to bring material well-being to humanity, the religious spirit must find—in the Source of inspiration from which it flows—new spiritual concepts and principles relevant to an age that seeks to establish unity and justice in human affairs.

Unemployment raises similar issues. In most of contemporary

thinking, the concept of work has been largely reduced to that of gainful employment aimed at acquiring the means for the consumption of available goods. The system is circular: acquisition and consumption resulting in the maintenance and expansion of the production of goods and, in consequence, in supporting paid employment. Taken individually, all of these activities are essential to the well-being of society. The inadequacy of the overall conception, however, can be read in both the apathy that social commentators discern among large numbers of the employed in every land and the demoralization of the growing armies of the unemployed.

Not surprisingly, therefore, there is increasing recognition that the world is in urgent need of a new “work ethic.” Here again, nothing less than insights generated by the creative interaction of the scientific and religious systems of knowledge can produce so fundamental a reorientation of habits and attitudes. Unlike animals, which depend for their sustenance on whatever the environment readily affords, human beings are impelled to express the immense capacities latent within them through productive work designed to meet their own needs and those of others. In acting thus they become participants, at however modest a level, in the processes of the advancement of civilization. They fulfill purposes that unite them with others. To the extent that work is consciously undertaken in a spirit of service to humanity, Bahá’u’lláh says, it is a form of prayer, a means of worshiping God. Every individual has the capacity to see himself or herself in this light, and it is to this inalienable capacity of the self that development strategy must appeal, whatever the nature of the plans being pursued, whatever the rewards they promise. No narrower a perspective will ever call up from the people of the world the magnitude of effort and commitment that the economic tasks ahead will require.

A challenge of similar nature faces economic thinking as a result of the environmental crisis. The fallacies in theories based on the belief that there is no limit to nature’s capacity to fulfill any demand made on it by human beings have now been coldly exposed. A culture which attaches absolute value to expansion, to acquisition, and to the satisfaction of people’s wants is being compelled to recognize that such goals are not, by themselves,

realistic guides to policy. Inadequate, too, are approaches to economic issues whose decision-making tools cannot deal with the fact that most of the major challenges are global rather than particular in scope.

The earnest hope that this moral crisis can somehow be met by deifying nature itself is an evidence of the spiritual and intellectual desperation that the crisis has engendered. Recognition that creation is an organic whole and that humanity has the responsibility to care for this whole, welcome as it is, does not represent an influence which can by itself establish in the consciousness of people a new system of values. Only a breakthrough in understanding that is scientific and spiritual in the fullest sense of the terms will empower the human race to assume the trusteeship toward which history impels it.

All people will have sooner or later to recover, for example, the capacity for contentment, the welcoming of moral discipline, and the devotion to duty that, until relatively recently, were considered essential aspects of being human. Repeatedly throughout history, the teachings of the Founders of the great religions have been able to instill these qualities of character in the mass of people who responded to them. The qualities themselves are even more vital today, but their expression must now take a form consistent with humanity's coming-of-age. Here again, religion's challenge is to free itself from the obsessions of the past: contentment is not fatalism; morality has nothing in common with the life-denying puritanism that has so often presumed to speak in its name; and a genuine devotion to duty brings feelings not of self-righteousness but of self-worth.

The effect of the persistent denial to women of full equality with men sharpens still further the challenge to science and religion in the economic life of humankind. To any objective observer the principle of the equality of the sexes is fundamental to all realistic thinking about the future well-being of the earth and its people. It represents a truth about human nature that has waited largely unrecognized throughout the long ages of the race's childhood and adolescence. "Women and men," is Bahá'u-lláh's emphatic assertion, "have been and will always be equal in the sight of God." The rational soul has no sex, and whatever social inequities may have been dictated by the survival require-

ments of the past, they clearly cannot be justified at a time when humanity stands at the threshold of maturity. A commitment to the establishment of full equality between men and women, in all departments of life and at every level of society, will be central to the success of efforts to conceive and implement a strategy of global development.

Indeed, in an important sense, progress in this area will itself be a measure of the success of any development program. Given the vital role of economic activity in the advancement of civilization, visible evidence of the pace at which development is progressing will be the extent to which women gain access to all avenues of economic endeavor. The challenge goes beyond ensuring an equitable distribution of opportunity, important as that is. It calls for a fundamental rethinking of economic issues in a manner that will invite the full participation of a range of human experience and insight hitherto largely excluded from the discourse. The classical economic models of impersonal markets in which human beings act as autonomous makers of self-regarding choices will not serve the needs of a world motivated by ideals of unity and justice. Society will find itself increasingly challenged to develop new economic models shaped by insights that arise from a sympathetic understanding of shared experience, from viewing human beings in relation to others, and from a recognition of the centrality to social well-being of the role of the family and the community. Such an intellectual breakthrough—strongly altruistic rather than self-centered in focus—must draw heavily on both the spiritual and scientific sensibilities of the race, and millenia of experience have prepared women to make crucial contributions to the common effort.

VI

To contemplate a transformation of society on this scale is to raise both the question of the power that can be harnessed to accomplish it and the issue inextricably linked to it, the authority to exercise that power. As with all other implications of the accelerating integration of the planet and its people, both of these familiar terms stand in urgent need of redefinition.

Throughout history—and despite theologically or ideologically inspired assurances to the contrary—power has been largely

interpreted as advantage enjoyed by persons or groups. Often, indeed, it has been expressed simply in terms of means to be used against others. This interpretation of power has become an inherent feature of the culture of division and conflict that has characterized the human race during the past several millenia, regardless of the social, religious, or political orientations that have enjoyed ascendancy in given ages, in given parts of the world. In general, power has been an attribute of individuals, factions, peoples, classes, and nations. It has been an attribute especially associated with men rather than women. Its chief effect has been to confer on its beneficiaries the ability to acquire, to surpass, to dominate, to resist, to win.

The resulting historical processes have been responsible for both ruinous setbacks in human well-being and extraordinary advances in civilization. To appreciate the benefits is to acknowledge also the setbacks, as well as the clear limitations of the behavioral patterns that have produced both. Habits and attitudes related to the use of power which emerged during the long ages of humanity's infancy and adolescence have reached the outer limits of their effectiveness. Today, in an era most of whose pressing problems are global in nature, persistence in the idea that power means advantage for various segments of the human family is profoundly mistaken in theory and of no practical service to the social and economic development of the planet. Those who still adhere to it—and who could in earlier eras have felt confident in such adherence—now find their plans enmeshed in inexplicable frustrations and hindrances. In its traditional, competitive expression, power is as irrelevant to the needs of humanity's future as would be the technologies of railway locomotion to the task of lifting space satellites into orbits around the earth.

The analogy is more than a little apt. The human race is being urged by the requirements of its own maturation to free itself from its inherited understanding and use of power. That it can do so is demonstrated by the fact that, although dominated by the traditional conception, humanity has always been able to conceive of power in other forms critical to its hopes. History provides ample evidence that, however intermittently and

ineptly, people of every background, throughout the ages, have tapped a wide range of creative resources within themselves. The most obvious example, perhaps, has been the power of truth itself, an agent of change associated with some of the greatest advances in the philosophical, religious, artistic, and scientific experience of the race. Force of character represents yet another means of mobilizing immense human response, as does the influence of example, whether in the lives of individual human beings or in human societies. Almost wholly unappreciated is the magnitude of the force that will be generated by the achievement of unity, an influence "so powerful," in Bahá'u'lláh's words, "that it can illuminate the whole earth."

The institutions of society will succeed in eliciting and directing the potentialities latent in the consciousness of the world's peoples to the extent that the exercise of authority is governed by principles that are in harmony with the evolving interests of a rapidly maturing human race. Such principles include the obligation of those in authority to win the confidence, respect, and genuine support of those whose actions they seek to govern; to consult openly and to the fullest extent possible with all whose interests are affected by decisions being arrived at; to assess in an objective manner both the real needs and the aspirations of the communities they serve; to benefit from scientific and moral advancement in order to make appropriate use of the community's resources, including the energies of its members. No single principle of effective authority is so important as giving priority to building and maintaining unity among the members of a society and the members of its administrative institutions. Reference has already been made to the intimately associated issue of commitment to the search for justice in all matters.

Clearly, such principles can operate only within a culture that is essentially democratic in spirit and method. To say this, however, is not to endorse the ideology of partisanship that has everywhere boldly assumed democracy's name and which, despite impressive contributions to human progress in the past, today finds itself mired in the cynicism, apathy, and corruption to which it has given rise. In selecting those who are to take

collective decisions on its behalf, society does not need and is not well served by the political theater of nominations, candidature, electioneering, and solicitation. It lies within the capacity of all people, as they become progressively educated and convinced that their real development interests are being served by programs proposed to them, to adopt electoral procedures that will gradually refine the selection of their decision-making bodies.

As the integration of humanity gains momentum, those who are thus selected will increasingly have to see all their efforts in a global perspective. Not only at the national, but also at the local level, the elected governors of human affairs should, in Bahá'u'lláh's view, consider themselves responsible for the welfare of all of humankind.

VII

The task of creating a global development strategy that will accelerate humanity's coming-of-age constitutes a challenge to reshape fundamentally all the institutions of society. The protagonists to whom the challenge addresses itself are all of the inhabitants of the planet: the generality of humankind, members of governing institutions at all levels, persons serving in agencies of international coordination, scientists and social thinkers, all those endowed with artistic talents or with access to the media of communication, and leaders of non-governmental organizations. The response called for must base itself on an unconditioned recognition of the oneness of humankind, a commitment to the establishment of justice as the organizing principle of society, and a determination to exploit to their utmost the possibilities that a systematic dialogue between the scientific and religious genius of the race can bring to the building of human capacity. The enterprise requires a radical rethinking of most of the concepts and assumptions currently governing social and economic life. It must be wedded, as well, to a conviction that, however long the process and whatever setbacks may be encountered, the governance of human affairs can be conducted along lines that serve humanity's real needs.

Only if humanity's collective childhood has indeed come to an end and the age of its adulthood is dawning does such a prospect represent more than another utopian mirage. To imagine that an effort of the magnitude envisioned here can be summoned up by despondent and mutually antagonistic peoples and nations runs counter to the whole of received wisdom. Only if, as Bahá'u'lláh asserts to be the case, the course of social evolution has arrived at one of those decisive turning points through which all of the phenomena of existence are impelled suddenly forward into new stages of their development, can such a possibility be conceived. A profound conviction that just so great a transformation in human consciousness is underway has inspired the views set forth in this statement. To all who recognize in it familiar promptings from within their own hearts, Bahá'u'lláh's words bring assurance that God has, in this matchless day, endowed humanity with spiritual resources fully equal to the challenge:

O ye that inhabit the heavens and the earth! There hath appeared what hath never previously appeared.

This is the Day in which God's most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things.

The turmoil now convulsing human affairs is unprecedented, and many of its consequences enormously destructive. Dangers unimagined in all history gather around a distracted humanity. The greatest error that the world's leadership could make at this juncture, however, would be to allow the crisis to cast doubt on the ultimate outcome of the process that is occurring. A world is passing away and a new one is struggling to be born. The habits, attitudes, and institutions that have accumulated over the centuries are being subjected to tests that are as necessary to human development as they are inescapable. What is required of the peoples of the world is a measure of faith and resolve to match the enormous energies with which the Creator of all things has endowed this spiritual springtime of the race. "Be united in counsel," is Bahá'u'lláh's appeal,

be one in thought. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion. Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavors be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe. Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low. Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts.

*The following statement was submitted by
the Bahá'í International Community to the
51st session of the United Nations
Human Rights Commission,
29 January–10 March 1995.*

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Among the basic human rights, the right to follow one's conscience in matters of religion and belief is undoubtedly one of the most cherished, so much so that people have been willing to endure the severest trials and even to lay down their lives rather than to surrender this fundamental right. And yet throughout history this human right has been frequently and openly violated. Strange indeed that the violators are most often those who consider themselves faithful followers of a religion. Their willingness to trample on the rights of those who believe differently than they do may be best understood as the consequence of two fundamental misconceptions widely perpetrated in the name of religion. The first is that the various religions are separate and competing entities, and that for one religion to be true the others must be false. The second is that certain doctrines and practices held to be false are threatening and must, therefore, be attacked.

The Bahá'í International Community would like to suggest that a careful reconsideration of both notions is long overdue. Some fresh thinking on the subject would not only make religious

tolerance more palatable to those with strongly held religious beliefs, but it could lead to a genuine appreciation of the various expressions of faith.

The concept that all the great religions proceed from the same Source merits serious contemplation. The Bahá'í writings point out that certain important teachings are found in all religions. For example, the injunction to love one's fellow men echoes throughout all the holy writings. The Old Testament enjoins: "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18). The Bhagavad-Gita (12:13) instructs: "A man should not hate any living creature. Let him be friendly and compassionate to all." These words sound not so different from "love your enemies, bless them that curse you" as uttered by Jesus (Matthew 5:44). Compassion, loving-kindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity are said by Buddhist scriptures to be divine conditions of the mind. "Do you love your creator? Love your fellow-beings first," reads a well-known Islamic tradition. And Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith writes: "ye were created to show love to one another and not perversity and rancor. Take pride not in love for yourselves...but in love for all mankind."¹ So prominent is the teaching of universal love among all religions that it could be viewed as a goal common to them all. That the basic human virtues—kindness, generosity, humility, trustworthiness—are taught by all religions would also suggest a common origin.

Even given the premise that all religions originate from the same Source, there are obvious differences among them which require explanation. According to the Bahá'í writings, "It is the outward practices of religion that are so different, and it is they that cause disputes and enmity—while the reality is always the same, and one. The Reality is the Truth, and truth...is God's guidance, it is the light of the world, it is love, it is mercy."²

1. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 138.

2. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911-1912*, 11th ed. (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972), pp. 120-121.

Many differences are caused by the accretion over time of conflicting ideas and practices. The social teachings, the rituals and observances, which give each religion its distinctive character, can best be understood in the context of the time and place where the religion was revealed. The ability to distinguish between the eternal spiritual truths, on the one hand, and the social instruction specific to a time and place, on the other, makes it possible to appreciate both the unity of religions and their diversity.

Legislation can and does suppress both acts of religious persecution and the attitude of religious intolerance itself. As Mr. Arcot Krishnaswami indicates in his *Study of Discrimination in the Matter of Religious Rights and Practices*, "Individuals are inclined to consider wrong what the law prohibits, and right what it enjoins them to do."³ However, to eradicate religious intolerance at its root, legislation must be supported by education, beginning in primary school. "Schools must first train the children in the principles of religion," says Bahá'u'lláh, "so that the Promise and the Threat, recorded in the Books of God, may prevent them from the things forbidden and adorn them with the mantle of the commandments; but this in such a measure that it may not injure the children by resulting in ignorant fanaticism and bigotry."⁴ Religious education should teach children to manifest the nobility with which they were endowed by a loving God. It should encourage them to cultivate in their own character such divine attributes as compassion, tolerance, justice, righteousness, loyalty, truthfulness, wisdom, and humility. Children who learn to see in all religions the signs of the one Creator, will consider all religions part of a common human heritage, worthy not only of respect but of careful study.

The study of the history and culture, if based on the premise of the oneness of humanity, should lead to a growing appreciation of the diverse religious traditions. This appreciation will be strengthened by interaction with people of different faiths, if the

3. A study prepared for the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (1958) E/CN.4/Sub.2/200, p. 63.

4. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 68.

purpose is to promote unity. An everyday familiarity with people of different backgrounds will help each individual to lift the veil of cultural difference and see beneath it the shared humanity of all the peoples of the world. "O people! Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship," Bahá'u'lláh commands His followers.⁵ "...[C]onsorting with people hath promoted and will continue to promote unity and concord."⁶

Those interested in these ideas may well find great encouragement in the experience of the Bahá'í communities. In attempting to put these ideas into practice, the Bahá'í communities are as living laboratories for religious unity; people from every religious tradition meet with the shared intention of establishing and strengthening the ties of unity among them. They gather to worship, to deepen their understanding of spiritual truths, to discover the requirements for social progress, to solve common practical problems, to organize and carry out activities for the welfare of mankind, and, last but not least, simply to enjoy the pleasures of friendship. In these communities religious prejudice has given way to interreligious brotherhood. They share a common goal: to demonstrate through deeds that the oneness of mankind is a reality and that its fruits are the material, intellectual and spiritual progress of all those who live in its light.

As representatives of a community still distressed by intermittent upsurges of religious intolerance, the Bahá'í International Community would like to take this opportunity to thank the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Abdelfatah Amor, for his work and assure him of our continued cooperation. We urge the governments of the world to assist the Special Rapporteur by responding to his questionnaire about methods for combatting religious intolerance.

This oral statement by the Bahá'í International Community was delivered to the 51st Session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, held 30 January–10 March 1995.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Bahá'í International Community welcomes the appointment last year of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. By urging the inclusion of this pivotal issue within the UN human rights framework, women's organizations have made a critical contribution to the promotion of human rights generally. For seeking to understand violence against women as an issue of basic human rights will no doubt shed light on the causes of other forms of violence and will facilitate the discovery of strategies for curbing the disturbing rise of violence across all levels of our societies.

Violence against women is a yardstick by which one can measure the violation of all human rights. It can be used to gauge the degree to which a society is governed by aggressivity, dominated by competition and ruled by force. Abusive practices against women have frequently been and are still being justified in the context of cultural norms, religious beliefs and unfounded "scientific theories" and assumptions. But whatever its political or religious system, a society patterned on dominance inevitably gives rise to such distortions of power as violence against women.

5. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 22.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

It is becoming increasingly evident, however, that all forms of violence against women degrade not only the victim but the perpetrator as well. Those who inflict violence on women are themselves among the casualties of power-based systems. When unbridled competition, aggression and tyranny destroy the fabric of society, everyone suffers. In the Bahá'í view, "the harvest of force is turmoil and the ruin of the social order" and violence against women is a grave symptom of this larger disorder.

Our challenge is to search out new strategies and adopt fresh models that will encourage a healthier, more cooperative society at all levels. We need to move consciously away from patterns of force and aggressivity and towards methods of consultation and peace-making. Because of the rise in crime and pornography, the increase in ethnic violence and the collapse of the family, more and more individuals, organizations and governments are seeking alternatives to violence in managing conflict.

One of the essential ways to encourage more cooperation is through education. While economic disparity and legal inequality are known to contribute to incidents of violence against women, it is obvious that violence arises from ignorance—the failure to understand such fundamental realities as the oneness of the human race and the mistaken notion that force is the only honorable way to resolve conflicts. Education—moral, material and practical—is therefore not only a fundamental right but a practical necessity in today's world. Any attempt to curb societal violence that does not educate individuals to overcome gender prejudice will certainly fall short. At a time when illiteracy is increasing among women in the developing world and levels of learning are falling for both sexes in industrial societies, it is vitally important to reemphasize the role of education everywhere if violence against women is to be controlled.

Ironically enough, the place where women and girls are most subject to violence and neglect is within their own homes, at the nerve center of the family. If families educate their daughters, and the community systematically encourages the education of girl children, both the family and the community benefit. Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, has emphasized that mothers are the first educators of the next generation,

in the broadest interpretation of those terms, and that where resources are limited priority must, therefore, be given to education of girl children. But the problem of violence cannot truly be resolved unless men are also educated to value women as equal partners. Any effort to protect women against male aggression which does not involve the early training of boys will necessarily be short-lived. Likewise, all attempts to understand the causes and consequences of violence against women which do not involve men are bound to fail.

The Bahá'í International Community, therefore, warmly welcomes the inclusion of a full analysis of violence against women in the mandate of the Special Rapporteur. It also welcomes the invitation by the Commission on Human Rights to "recommend measures to eliminate violence against women and its causes, and to remedy its consequences."

Since the Bahá'í International Community has invested considerable effort at the grass roots in the education and training of both men and women in partnership, we would gladly offer to share our experience. For example, our recent collaboration with UNIFEM in three projects using traditional media as a change agent in society has drawn the attention of UNICEF because one result of the project was a decline in family violence. In this respect, we look forward to further collaboration with the Special Rapporteur.

**ONE
COUNTRY:**
A Global Newsletter

La terre n'est qu'un seul pays et tous les hommes en sont les citoyens.

La tierra es un solo país y la humanidad sus ciudadanos.

Вся Земля — одна страна, и все люди ее граждане.

地球乃一國，人類皆其民。

地球乃一國，人類皆其民。

Die Erde ist nur ein Land, und alle Menschen sind seine Bürger.

The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.

This brief quotation from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh appears on the masthead of the French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, German, and English editions of the Bahá'í International Community's quarterly newsletter, appropriately named *One Country*. Appearing first in English in 1989, it now has a circulation, in six languages, of approximately 39,000, including individuals and organizations in more than 174 countries.

Offering a Bahá'í perspective on activities at the United Nations and around the world, *One Country* presents its readers with a distinctive way of looking at events and stories, a reference point that focuses on consensus and achievement instead of conflict and

discord. With a mandate of service to the world community at large, it seeks, in the best tradition of journalism, to cover those stories that other publications have missed, underplayed, or overlooked. It reports, for example, on the UN, sustainable development, the advancement of women, and human rights in ways that tell of the emergence of consensus in the world community.

A recent issue of *One Country* covered the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and included a story about how an organization called the European Bahá'í Business Forum is seeking to promote ethics and spirituality among members of the business community. Another issue covered a two-day symposium on strategies for creating violence-free families. The UN action concerning human rights violations of Iran's Bahá'ís under the Islamic Revolutionary Government has received coverage. A unique project, cosponsored by the Bahá'í International Community and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), designed to promote social change around the issue of gender equality, was covered in a feature article in 1993. Other United Nations conferences and summits have also been featured, as have small local projects to assist street kids in Brazil, help new immigrants in Australia, and care for the environment in Japan. The January–March 1995 issue's cover story focused on the Guaymí people of Panama and their efforts to make their own path to future progress while maintaining their important traditional values.

The quarterly has a large readership in widely varying locations and sectors of society, including prominent people working in the issue areas covered by the newsletter. While some readers are members of the Bahá'í community, many are people who share the Bahá'ís' vision of the world as depicted in the quotation that appears on the cover of every issue. The newsletter is also circulated to and displayed in a number of libraries, and it is frequently distributed at major UN conferences.

The fact that the viewpoint offered by *One Country* is widely appreciated is confirmed by the highly positive response and large volume of mail that the newsletter receives from its readers, including embassies and government offices in places as far-flung as Angola, Trinidad and Tobago, the Cook Islands, Israel,



Versions of One Country are published in English, simplified Chinese, French, Spanish, Russian, traditional Chinese, and German.

Mauritius, the Bahamas, Zimbabwe, the United States, and Australia. Numerous United Nations Associations and non-governmental organizations such as the International Council of Women in France, the Club of Rome in Turkey, the Organización Panamericana de la Salud in Costa Rica, the Rural Development Foundation in Pakistan, the Swedish Association for World Federation, the Conflict Resolution Network in Australia, the Secretariado Nacional de Instituciones Privadas de Bienestar Social in Peru, and the Council on International and Public Affairs in the United States have given encouraging feedback, as have universities in the US, Lebanon, Mauritius, Costa Rica, and Canada. A number of UN agencies have also written to express gratitude for receiving the newsletter.

Samples from *One Country's* mailbag include the following two messages. The first is from a representative of Physicians Against Nuclear War, who was sent the Russian-language edition and responded by writing, "I am deeply grateful for your journal. The goals and work of the Bahá'í International Community, towards peace and social welfare, find a responsive chord in the hearts of many people and the information about your activities promotes the understanding of peace and unity among differing cultural traditions. As a representative of PANW, I hope that *One Country* will be used in our work and I will tell others about it." From Mali, a USAID worker wrote, "The article about 'Street Kids' in Brazil was superb. I'll try to share the coming issues with other colleagues in my service. Keep going

the way you are....” Such correspondence, from NGOs, like-minded organizations, diplomatic missions, governments, and individuals from all walks of life and from all parts of the planet, shows the diversity of the newsletter’s audience.

The appeal of the subjects covered has also prompted a number of other news organizations, journals, and periodicals such as the *Brundtland Bulletin*, the *New Road*, the *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society*, the *Sunday Times of Zambia*, and Malaysia’s daily newspaper the *Star* to reprint various stories that originally appeared in *One Country*. Prestigious French-language publications have reprinted articles from the French edition, and the newsletter has been recommended by *Le Monde diplomatique*. Articles have also been extracted and placed in several electronic databases, and they are being made available by third parties on both CD-ROM and over the Internet. For example, TogetherNet carries the full text of *One Country* as part of its on-line service. Likewise, Responsive Database Services, Inc., recently sought and received permission to include the texts of stories from *One Country* in its International Women’s Issues Database.

Stories appearing in *One Country* are also sent to the editors of various Bahá’í publications around the world for their possible use in covering activities of the United Nations and in writing stories about other topics included in the quarterly. Articles reprinted from *One Country* have appeared in Bahá’í publications in India, Alaska, and Germany, for example, and are often carried by the Bahá’í International News Service.

The first English-language issue of *One Country* came off the press in February 1989. The French version appeared a few months later in October, and the first Chinese edition, which is produced in both traditional and simplified characters, came out in September 1990. The year 1992 saw the release of the Russian edition and the Spanish appeared in July 1993. A German-language version was in circulation by early 1994. While all editions have the same basic focus, there is room for articles of particular interest to the different parts of the world and different language groups served by each. All have proven to be popular. The English-language edition has a current print run of 20,000, with a mailing list of approximately 17,000. The French print run

stands at 4,000, the Russian at 8,000, Spanish at 3,000, and German 2,000. The numbers of subscribers are continually expanding. For example, the first Chinese version was sent to 250 addressees in 27 countries in 1990 and has since grown to circulate to some 2,000 in over 30 countries.

Written and produced in New York from the Bahá’í International Community Office of Public Information, the English version of *One Country* is the work of one full-time writer/editor and an administrative assistant, while the French, Spanish, German, and Russian editions are largely realized through the efforts of volunteers coordinated from the Office of Public Information in Paris. The Chinese edition is also produced by volunteers.

The secret of *One Country*’s success lies, perhaps, in the dedication of the people who produce it and—thanks to modern technology—in their ability to collaborate from far-flung locations. The English-language editor, Brad Pokorny, is a professional journalist with wide knowledge of international organizations. He worked for more than seven years as a staff writer for the *Boston Globe*, covering politics, government, and issues related to nuclear power and science and technology prior to starting up *One Country*. He travels several times a year to gather material for upcoming issues but also relies on volunteers around the world who can assist him in finding and writing stories. Use of global communication networks such as the Internet facilitates this collaboration and also allows for the production of a number of different language editions without incurring substantial additional costs.

The editors of the various language editions enjoy working with others from different social, cultural, and professional backgrounds all over the world and claim a particular pride in the quality and reception of the publication. Finding stories of special interest to their readership, providing the best possible translation of articles from the English version, and meeting deadlines for the production of the newsletter on a regular quarterly basis have, in some cases, proven to be acutely challenging, but not unattainable. So has operating with a modest budget.

One obvious measure of excellence is recognition by one’s

peers, and *One Country* can boast a solid record on that front. Since 1991, the newsletter has received either one or two awards each year from the APEX Awards for Publication Excellence issued by Communications Concepts, a national writing and editorial consulting firm based in Washington, DC. In 1991, *One Country* took the APEX grand award for newsletters; in 1992 and 1993, for newsletter writing and feature writing. Also in 1993, it received the general award for nonprofit newsletters. In both 1994 and 1995 its newsletter and editorial writing were recognized by APEX, particularly for the editorials "Human Rights and Education" and "On Unity and Diversity." In fact, *One Country's* feature article entitled "Helping Street Kids in Brazil Find a New Life" won both an award from APEX and another for excellence in feature writing from the Religious Public Relations Council, an interfaith, professional association of religious communicators whose awards are issued by juries of secular journalists and media professionals. The Religious Public Relations Council also recognized *One Country's* feature on "Reconsidering Civic Responsibilities in Albania" with an award of excellence in 1994.

Throughout *One Country's* six-year history, the newsletter has consistently expanded its readership, striven for higher levels of excellence in its writing, and sought out interesting, positively-focused stories from around the globe. It provides an alternative perspective, realistic yet hopeful, to the news presented by the mainstream press. Its success, whether measured by its growing number of subscribers, the awards it has received, the number of its articles picked up and reprinted by other publications, the "fan letters" it receives, or the expansion of the different language editions, is heartening. Such support and recognition from various quarters show that the publication of a high-quality quarterly on a budget that is comparatively modest to those of other similar worldwide publications, is welcomed by diverse groups around the planet—an indication of *One Country's* success as a "global newsletter."

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

OBITUARIES

Alfred Owen Batrick

On 14 April 1995 in Tahiti. Owen Batrick was born in Middlesex, England, on 6 December 1919 and enrolled in the Bahá'í community in 1953. He rendered devoted services to the Bahá'í Faith for four decades, teaching primarily in Europe and Australasia and pioneering to New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands in 1968 with his wife, Jeannette. His contributions to administration include eleven years on the Board of Counsellors in Australasia and service on the National Spiritual Assemblies of the British Isles, the Southwest Pacific, New Caledonia, and New Zealand. He passed away while on a teaching trip to Tahiti.

Salvator "Sue" Benatar

On 5 April 1995 in South Africa. Born in 1917, "Sue" Benatar was the third Rhodesian and first white to become a Bahá'í in the southern African region, in 1955. He served as a member of the

Auxiliary Board for a broad region of southern Africa and a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa. In 1977, he and his wife, Sylvia, pioneered to South Africa. A professional photographer, he served in this capacity for several international Bahá'í conferences.

Carmen de Burafato

In April 1994 in Mexico. Born in the United States and educated in the US, Guatemala, and Mexico, Carmen de Burafato specialized in the arts, languages, and business administration. She became a Bahá'í in California in 1953 and moved to Mexico in 1957 to fulfill a goal of the Ten Year Plan. In that country, she served on the National Spiritual Assembly (with her husband, Sam) and on the Auxiliary Board, and in 1968 she was appointed a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Americas. In 1975 she represented the

Bahá'í International Community at the first United Nations International Women's Conference. She traveled constantly throughout Central America and the Caribbean and shared the Bahá'í teachings with presidents and ministers of state.

Pieter J. de Vogel

On 5 March 1995 in Australia. Born 28 December 1930 in Rotterdam, Holland, he became a Bahá'í in 1956. He played a crucial role in the development of the Australian Bahá'í community through his almost three decades of service on the National Spiritual Assembly, culminating in the establishment of the Office of Government Affairs. He served as the first full-time secretary of the National Assembly, acted as national treasurer, and presented the Bahá'í Faith to a number of prominent people, including two Prime Ministers. He and his wife, Kay, raised two daughters.

Enos Epyeru

On 1 March 1995 in Uganda. Born in 1917 in Opot, Teso, Uganda, he was the second of the Teso tribe to accept the Bahá'í Faith in that country (1952), after the Hand of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga. He served on Local Spiritual Assemblies and on the National Spiritual Assembly of Uganda, pioneered to Kenya during the Ten Year Plan, taught the Faith in Monrovia, Liberia, and translated Bahá'í literature into Ateso. A teacher by profession, he and his wife, Edisa Ilemungolet, raised six children.

Arthur Bonshaw Irwin

On 10 June 1994 in Canada. Arthur Irwin, born 6 June 1915 in Vancouver, Canada, spent much of his 47 years as a Bahá'í teaching the Faith to the native peoples of Canada, Alaska, and the Caribbean. He and his wife, Lily Ann, established the first Native

Indian Friendship Center in Calgary, Alberta; they introduced the indigenous peoples of Barbados, Belize, and St. Lucia to the Faith while pioneering there; and he was honored by the Blackfoot, Peigan, Blood, and Morely tribes in Alberta for his honesty and integrity. A geologist with a doctorate in the field, Irwin worked on Indian reserves in Canada ensuring that fair market value was paid for leases on natural resources.

Andres Jachakollo

In November 1994. Born 10 November 1921 in Villakolo, Oruro, Bolivia, he accepted the Faith at the age of 35. He was the country's first indigenous Bahá'í, and he opened many indigenous communities. He attended and spoke at the first Bahá'í World Congress in London in 1963. He was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia in 1961 and in 1972 was appointed to the Auxiliary Board, a service he performed to an advanced age.

Viva Elisa Lismore

On 29 November 1994 in France. Born Viva Elisa Carlstein in Villarica, Paraguay, on 23 May 1901, she served the Bahá'í Faith extensively in Cuba, Canada, Europe, and South America. After enrolling in the community in 1946, she began a life of service that included membership on the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Central America and the National Spiritual Assembly of Cuba, and teaching in Argentina, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Germany, Sweden, England, Bermuda, and throughout Canada. An interior decorator and furniture designer, she raised four children with her husband, Major Francis Lismore.

Louisito Walter L. Maddela Jr.

On 8 October 1994 in Russia. Walter Maddela was born into a Bahá'í fam-

ily on 9 June 1952 in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. He served on numerous national Bahá'í committees and was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1974, the same year he became a pioneer among the Mangyan Hanunuo Tribe of Mindoro Occidental and opened the first Bahá'í tutorial school in the Philippines. He pioneered to Kiribati in 1979 and traveled to teach the Bahá'í Faith in Fiji, Samoa, Nauru, and the Solomon Islands. In 1992 he pioneered to Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, where he served until his death.

Guy Martail

On 3 August 1994 in Martinique. Born in December 1927 in Martinique, he became the first Bahá'í of the French Antilles when he accepted the Faith in French Guiana in 1955. He served on the Spiritual Assembly of the French Antilles, the Teaching Committee of Martinique, and the first National Spiritual Assembly of Martinique, formed in 1984. He was a renowned portrait photographer and cabinetmaker, and he and his wife, Constance, raised four children.

Louella McKay

On 15 April 1995 in the United States. Louella McKay was born in Portland, Oregon, USA, in October 1918 and became a Bahá'í at the age of 25. Named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for pioneering to Spanish Morocco in 1953, she stayed in that country until 1959, apart from five months spent in Spanish Guinea (now Equatorial Guinea). Back in the US, she established the first certified school of cosmetology for inmates at the Detroit House of Corrections.

Muriel Auble Miessler

On 18 October 1994 in Brazil. Muriel Miessler was born 6 November 1901 in Forrest, Indiana, USA, and joined

the Bahá'í Faith not long before her marriage in 1943. She and her husband, Edmund, left the United States in 1946 to help establish a Bahá'í community in Brazil, a country she then served for nearly half a century. She was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil in 1961 and continued to serve on that body for more than two decades. She recorded the services of the first pioneers to the area in the book *Pioneering in Brazil*.

Marthe Molitor

In 1995 in Belgium. Marthe Molitor was a painter and journalist who received the Paris "Arts-Sciences-Literature" gold medal and an award from the Academia Leonardo da Vinci in Rome. She discovered the Bahá'í Faith in 1947 during a trip to Belgium from her home in Rwanda. Upon her return, she began teaching the Faith and helped form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Brazzaville, in the Congo. She also taught in Zaire and later in Belgium, where she worked for the newspaper *L'Afrique et le monde* and eventually settled permanently following the death of her husband, George.

Áqá Muḥammad-Şádiq Munjazéb

On 14 August 1994 in Uzbekistan. Born in 1902 in Mashhad, Persia (now Iran), Áqá Muḥammad-Şádiq Munjazéb embraced the Bahá'í Faith in 1925. In 1929 he pioneered to Samarkand, in the Soviet Union. Two terms of imprisonment, for a total of twelve years, in Siberia did not deter this believer from his devotion to the Faith. He traveled to teach the Faith in Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, and remained living in Uzbekistan until his death. He and his wife, Masiha Nekbat, raised six children.

Horace Mozart Newton

In March 1995 in Barbados. He was the first Barbadian Bahá'í, born in Barbados 14 December 1923 and declaring his faith in 1963. He served on the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Christ Church and continued to be elected for approximately 20 years. He also served as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Barbados and the Windward Islands for one year.

Sarah Martin Pereira

On 5 April 1995 in the United States. Raised in Ohio in one of the earliest Bahá'í families of African American background, Dr. Sarah Martin Pereira rendered outstanding Bahá'í services over six decades, including homefront and international pioneering and membership on the first Auxiliary Board of the Western Hemisphere (1954–1964), the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States (1960–1973), and the Continental Board of Counsellors in the Americas (1973–1985). A professor of romance languages, she held teaching positions at Shaw University, West Virginia State University, Tennessee A and I University, District of Columbia Teachers College, and the University of the District of Columbia. She also held administrative positions at a number of these universities and published in a variety of professional journals.

Gilbert Robert

On 11 April 1995 in Réunion. Gilbert Robert was born 12 March 1922 in Hell-Bourg, Réunion, and in 1953 he became the first person to accept the Bahá'í Faith in Madagascar. His record of service includes membership on Auxiliary Boards in Madagascar and France, the National Spiritual Assembly of France, and the Continental Board of Counsellors in Africa. He was a doctor of naturopathy and a

writer, and he and his wife, Daisy, raised five children.

Irene Frances Williams

On 14 July 1994 in Fiji. Born 3 December 1920 in Australia, she spent 40 years of her life in Fiji. Her distinguished contributions to the Bahá'í Faith, following her enrollment in 1948, include service as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Fiji, membership on the Auxiliary Board and assistance with the establishment and operation of the Fijian Bahá'í Publishing Trust. She worked as an accountant for the Fiji Broadcasting Commission for 22 years.

Carole Woodard

On 5 November 1994 in Venezuela. She and her husband, Weldon, pioneered from the United States to Venezuela, where they remained for 28 years, raising five children. Despite life-long health problems, she served as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly for many years and undertook numerous teaching trips which led to the establishment of Local Spiritual Assemblies. She was trained as a nurse and then became a doctor, working in a clinic for the poor until her death at the age of 55.

Abdu'l Rahman Zarqani

On 25 September 1994 in the Seychelles. Born 16 October 1923 in India, he accepted the Bahá'í Faith in 1945. He served as secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of India from 1952 to 1954, when he resigned to pioneer with his wife, Munira, to the Seychelles. He was named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for fulfilling this goal of the Ten Year Plan. Mr. Zarqani spent the rest of his life in the Seychelles, rearing six children and serving on both the first Local Spiritual Assembly and first National Spiritual Assembly of the country.

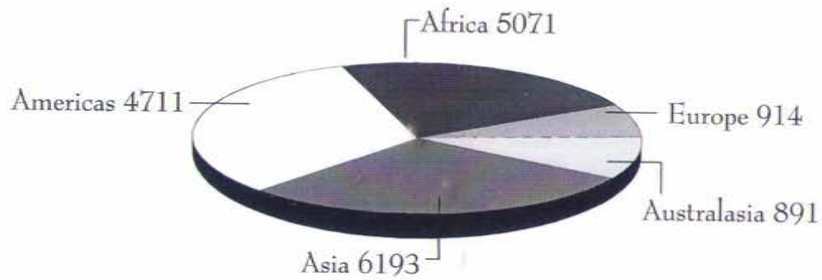
STATISTICS

General Statistics

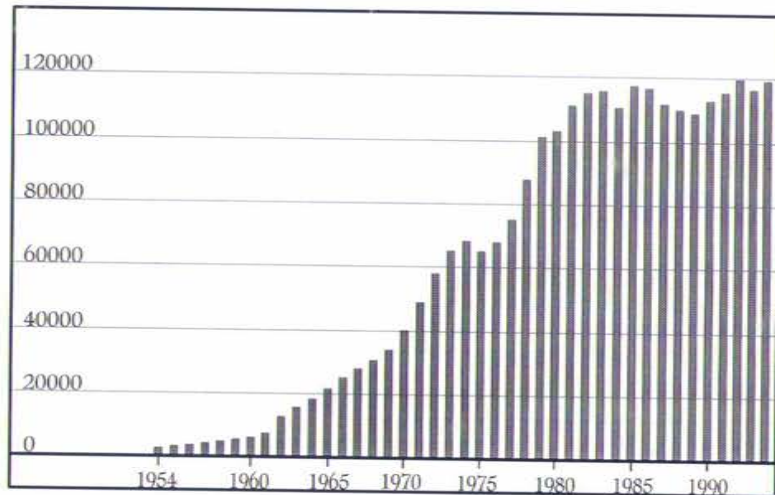
Worldwide Bahá'í population	More than 5 million
Countries/dependent territories where the Bahá'í Faith is established	189 countries/ 46 territories
Continental Counsellors	72
Auxiliary Board members serving throughout the world	846
National/Regional Spiritual Assemblies	172
Local Spiritual Assemblies	17,780
Localities where Bahá'ís reside	119,276
Tribes, races and ethnic groups represented in the Bahá'í community	2,112
Languages into which Bahá'u'lláh's writings have been translated	802
Bahá'í Publishing Trusts	30

All statistics as of May 1994

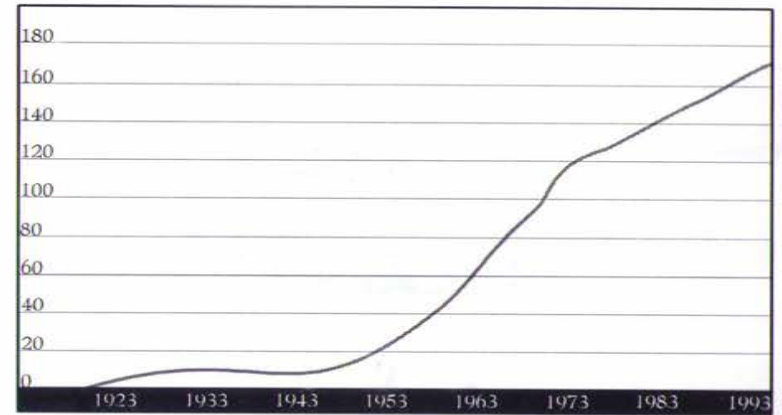
Geographic distribution of Local Spiritual Assemblies by continent



Growth in the number of localities where Bahá'ís reside



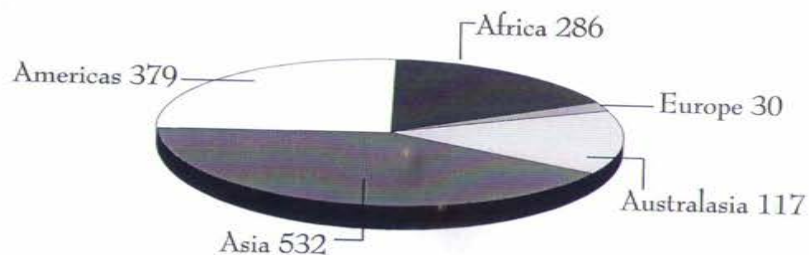
Growth in the number of National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies



Social and Economic Development

Bahá'í radio stations	6
Bahá'í schools	Academic: 178 Tutorial: 488
Bahá'í literacy programs	186
Bahá'í conservation/ environment projects	52
Bahá'í agricultural projects	21
Bahá'í health projects	56
Bahá'í women and youth projects	52
Other Bahá'í development projects	305
Total number of Bahá'í social and economic development projects in 1992	1,344

Geographic distribution of social and economic development projects by continent



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Selected **NEW** PUBLICATIONS

And the Trees Clapped their Hands: Stories of Bahá'í Pioneers

Compiled by Claire Vreeland. Oxford: George Ronald, 1994. 408 pp.

Free-lance journalist Claire Vreeland presents 38 inspiring stories of men and women who faced the challenges of new cultures, jobs, languages, and lifestyles to take the message of Bahá'u'lláh around the world.

Angel Ruckus

B.K. Filson. Manotick, Ontario: Nine Pines Publishing, 1994. 64 pp.

A book of poetry by a writer whose works draw from his rural roots and urban adult life and explore Bahá'í themes.

The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 2: Early Expansion 1900-1912

Robert H. Stockman. Oxford: George Ronald, 1995. 592 pp.

A sequel to *The Bahá'í Faith in America: Origins 1892-1900* which looks at the second phase of the development of the North American Bahá'í community from its early efforts at consolidation, through its expansion into the west and south, to its emergence as one of the key Bahá'í communities in the world. The volume contains new authorized translations of 33 tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

* Address communications to Bahá'í World Centre, P.O. Box 155, 31 001, Haifa, Israel.

Basic Truths Series

Bambi Betts. Oxford: George Ronald, 1995. 32 pp. and 15 line drawings per book.

The third set in a popular series for young children, these books are designed to help parents teach their children some of the ideas enshrined in the Bahá'í teachings. *Wings of a Bird* addresses the concept of equality between women and men, *When I Die* provides ideas for responding to children's questions about death, and *I Agree* is concerned with the importance of the laws God reveals.

Behold Me: Bahá'í Writings on Unity

Based on a compilation originally prepared by George Allen. London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995. 144 pp.

The first truly comprehensive selection of more than 230 extracts from the Bahá'í writings on the central theme of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation: the unity of the human race. The selections, accompanied by photographs, are thematically arranged to focus on different aspects of unity, such as overcoming prejudices of race and color, the role of the Bahá'í community in establishing world unity, foundations of unity, and Bahá'u'lláh—the Unifier.

Buddhism and the Bahá'í Faith: An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith for Theravada Buddhists

Moojan Momen. Oxford: George Ronald, 1995. 128 pp.

An examination of the similarities between the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Buddha, with particular emphasis on ethical and moral teachings, metaphysical teachings, social teachings, and laws, rituals, and festivals. The volume also considers the prophecies of the Buddha and the life of Bahá'u'lláh.

Dimensions in Spirituality: Reflections on the Meaning of Spiritual Life and Transformation in Light of the Bahá'í Faith

J.A. McLean. Oxford: George Ronald, 1994. 336 pp.

J.A. McLean, who holds a master's degree in the history of religions, offers personal reflections and analysis of Bahá'í writings, combined with ideas gleaned from spiritual psychology, philosophical theology and the world's religions, to provide the contemporary seeker with insights into the search for truth, the meaning of prophetic faith, prayer and meditation, finding meaning in adversity, and the dynamics of spiritual growth.

The Great Adventure

Florence Mayberry. Manotick, Ontario: Nine Pines Publishing, 1994, 217 pp.

Florence Mayberry tells the story of her life, from her earliest years growing up in the Ozarks of the United States through her discovery of the Bahá'í Faith to her many years as a Bahá'í Counsellor, including her extensive travels and her appointment as a member of the International Teaching Centre when that body was inaugurated in 1973.

Journey into Exile: The Story of Bahá'u'lláh

Written and illustrated by Mary Firman. London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1994. 32 pp.

This activity book for children ages 7-12 provides insight into the historical background of the life and times of Bahá'u'lláh, giving facts about the Middle East in the nineteenth century through puzzles and games.

A Key to Loving

Betty Frost. Oxford: George Ronald, 1994. 72 pp.

The author looks for solutions in the Bahá'í writings to the difficulties of maintaining loving, creative relationships with spouses, family members, and colleagues.

Knowing Yourself Fully

Jimmi Shayne. Manotick, Ontario: Nine Pines Publishing, 1994. 59 pp.

A first book of short verse by a well-loved teacher of the Bahá'í Faith.

Lectures on Bahá'í-Inspired Curricula

Farzam Arbab. Riviera Beach, Florida: Palabra Publications, 1994. 76 pp.

Dr. Farzam Arbab describes an approach to curricular development taken by educators in Colombia and other nations to base a general curriculum on Bahá'í teachings.

Life After Death: A Study of the Afterlife in World Religions

Farnáz Ma'súmián. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1995. 200 pp.

This investigation of the afterlife teachings of seven world religions explores the nature of the soul and concepts such as heaven and hell, examines the doctrines of reincarnation and transmigration, and compares accounts of near-death experiences with religious beliefs about the afterlife.

Life, Death, and Immortality: The Journey of the Soul

Compiled by Terrill G. Hayes, Betty J. Fisher, Richard A. Hill, Terry J. Cassiday. Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1994. 193 pp.

A collection of Bahá'í writings on the soul and its development which explains the purpose of life and includes prayers and meditations for spiritual awakening and growth.

The Most Holy Tablet

Bahá'u'lláh. Original photographs by Mark Sadan. London: Nightingale Books, 1995. 72 pp.

Mark Sadan's photographs of scenes associated with Bahá'u'lláh's exile in the Holy Land accompany this tablet in which Bahá'u'lláh reveals parallels between His own life and the sufferings of Jesus and asserts His claim to be Christ returned in the glory of the Father.

The Proofs of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission

Compiled by Paul Lample. Riviera Beach, Florida: Palabra Publications, 1994. 234 pp.

Compiled from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice, this book presents Bahá'u'lláh's own explanations and proofs supporting His station as the Manifestation of God for this day.

Reflections

Compiled by Akwasi O. Osei. Oxford: George Ronald, 1994. 128 pp.

A rich compilation of verses from the Bahá'í writings selected to inspire reflection on such topics as the meaning of life, the mystery of love, peace, virtue, and the new world envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh.

Reflections on the Life of the Spirit

Ruhi Institute. Riviera Beach, Florida: Palabra Publications, 1994. 52 pp.

This book combines the three basic spiritual foundation courses of the Ruhi Institute: understanding the Bahá'í writings, prayer, and life after death. The courses are specifically designed to develop the capability to read and understand the Bahá'í writings and to evoke the spiritual attitudes and behaviors that can serve as a means for service to the Cause.

Sexuality, Relationships and Spiritual Growth

Agnes Ghaznavi. Oxford: George Ronald, 1995. 173 pp.

A practicing psychiatrist examines the age-old questions related to sexuality and chastity within the paradigm brought by the Bahá'í Faith, offering a new understanding of the link between the spiritual and the physical in marriage.

Songs for the Phoenix

Michael Fitzgerald. Oxford: George Ronald, 1995. 224 pp.

Michael Fitzgerald's eighth book of poetry focuses on the spirit in daily life and the spirit within. This collection of 150 new poems, as well as a selection of previously published poems, is also a celebration of collective life and the ideal mission of the divine Messenger.

Teaching Children's Classes, Grade 1

Ruhi Institute. Riviera Beach, Florida: Palabra Publications, 1995. 128 pp.

This volume includes three courses designed to develop the skills and capabilities needed to conduct Bahá'í children's classes: some principles of Bahá'í education; lessons for children's classes, grade 1; and conducting classes for children.

Twin Holy Days: Birthday of Bahá'u'lláh, Birthday of the Báb

Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1994. 129 pp.

This compilation includes prayers and tablets revealed for these Holy Days, stories about the birth and childhood of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, the history of the first observances of these days, and quotations from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb.

A Basic **BAHÁ'Í**
READING List

The following list has been prepared to provide a sampling of works conveying the spiritual truths, social principles, and history of the Bahá'í Faith. It is by no means exhaustive. For a more complete record of Bahá'í literature, see Bibliography of English-language Works on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths, 1844–1985, compiled by William P. Collins (Oxford: George Ronald, 1990).

SELECTED WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

The Kitáb-i-Aqdas

“The Most Holy Book,” Bahá'u'lláh's charter for a new world civilization. Written in Arabic in 1873, the volume's first authorized English translation was released in 1993.

The Kitáb-i-Íqán

“The Book of Certitude” was written prior to Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of His mission as an explanation of progressive revelation and a proof of the station of the Báb.

The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh

Written in the form of a compilation of moral aphorisms, these brief verses distill the spiritual guidance of all the Divine Revelations of the past.

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas

A compilation of tablets revealed between 1873 and 1892 which enunciate important principles of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, reaffirm truths He previously proclaimed, elaborate on some of His laws, reveal further prophecies, and establish subsidiary ordinances to supplement the provisions of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

A selection of Bahá'u'lláh's sacred writings translated and compiled by the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to convey the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh's life and teachings.

WRITINGS OF THE BÁB

Selections from the Writings of the Báb

The first compilation of the Báb's writings to be translated into English.

SELECTED WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911-1912

Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to a wide variety of audiences in Paris in 1911-1912, explaining the basic principles of the Bahá'í Faith.

The Secret of Divine Civilization

A message addressed to the rulers and people of Persia in 1875 illuminating the causes of the fall and rise of civilization and elucidating the spiritual character of true civilization.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

A compilation of selected letters from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's extensive correspondence on a wide variety of topics, including the purpose of life, the nature of love, and the development of character.

Some Answered Questions

A translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's answers to a series of questions posed to Him during interviews with Laura Clifford Barney between 1904 and 1906. The topics covered include the influence of the Prophets in the evolution of humanity, the Bahá'í perspective on Christian doctrine, and the powers and conditions of the Manifestations of God.

SELECTED WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

God Passes By

A detailed history of the first one hundred years of the Bahá'í Faith.

The Promised Day Is Come

A commentary on Bahá'u'lláh's letters to the kings and rulers of the world.

World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters

An exposition on the relation between the Bahá'í community and the entire process of social evolution under the dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, in the form of a series of letters from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of the West between 1929 and 1936.

INTRODUCTORY WORKS

Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'í International Community, Office of Public Information, 1991.

A brief statement detailing Bahá'u'lláh's life and work issued on the occasion of the centenary of His passing.

Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era

John Esslemont. 5th rev. paper ed. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990.

The first comprehensive account of the Bahá'í Faith, written in 1923 and updated for subsequent editions.

The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion

William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985.

Textbook providing an overview of Bahá'í history, teachings, administrative structures, and community life.

All Things Made New

John Ferraby. 2nd rev. ed. London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987.

A comprehensive outline of the Bahá'í Faith.

Most of the books listed above have been published by various Bahá'í Publishing Trusts and are available in bookshops, libraries, or from the Trusts. Please see the Directory for addresses.

GLOSSARY

'Abdu'l-Bahá: (1844–1921) Son of Bahá'u'lláh, designated His successor and authorized interpreter of His writings. Named 'Abbás after His grandfather, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was known to the general public as 'Abbás Effendi. Bahá'u'lláh gave Him such titles as “the Most Great Branch,” “the Mystery of God,” and “the Master.” After Bahá'u'lláh's passing, He chose the name 'Abdu'l-Bahá, meaning “Servant of Bahá'u'lláh.”

Administrative Order: The system of administration as conceived by Bahá'u'lláh, formally established by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and realized during the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi. It consists, on the one hand, of a series of elected councils, universal, national and local, in which are invested legislative, executive, and judicial powers over the Bahá'í community, and, on the other hand, of eminent and devoted Bahá'ís appointed for the specific purpose of propagation and protection of the Faith under the guidance of the Head of that Faith, the Universal House of Justice.

Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum: Mary Sutherland Maxwell, an eminent North American Bahá'í who became the wife of Shoghi

Effendi Rabbání, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, in 1937, after which she became known as Rúhíyyih Khánum Rabbání. (Amatu'l-Bahá is a title meaning "Handmaiden of Bahá'u'lláh.") She served as the Guardian's secretary during his lifetime and was appointed a Hand of the Cause of God in 1952. She is the most prominent dignitary of the Bahá'í community.

Arc: An arc cut into Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel; along this pathway the international administrative buildings of the Bahá'í Faith are being built.

Auxiliary Boards: An institution created by Shoghi Effendi in 1954 to assist the Hands of the Cause of God. When the institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors was established in 1968 by the Universal House of Justice, the Auxiliary Boards were placed under its direction.

Báb, the: The title, meaning "Gate," assumed by Siyyid 'Alí-Muḥammad, the Prophet-Founder of the Bábí Faith and the Forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh. Born 20 October 1819, the Báb proclaimed Himself to be the Promised One of Islam and announced that His mission was to alert the people to the imminent advent of "Him Whom God shall make manifest," namely, Bahá'u'lláh. Because of these claims, the Báb was executed by order of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh on 9 July 1850.

Bahá'í Era: The period of the Bahá'í calendar beginning with the Declaration of the Báb on 23 May 1844, and expected to last until the next appearance of a Manifestation (Prophet) of God after the expiration of at least one thousand years.

Bahá'í International Community: A name used generally in reference to the worldwide Bahá'í community and officially in that community's external relations. In the latter context, the Bahá'í International Community is an association of the National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world and functions as an international non-governmental organization. Its offices include its Secretariat at the Bahá'í World Centre, a United Nations Office in New York with a branch in Geneva, an Office of Public Information, an Office of the Environment, and an Office for the Advancement of Women.

Bahá'í World Centre: The spiritual and administrative center of the Bahá'í Faith, located in the twin cities of Acre and Haifa, in Israel.

Bahá'u'lláh: Title assumed by Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí, Founder of the Bahá'í Faith. Born on 12 November 1817, He declared His mission as the Promised One of all Ages in April 1863 and passed away in Acre, Palestine, on 29 May 1892 after 40 years of imprisonment, banishment, and house arrest. Bahá'u'lláh's writings are considered by Bahá'ís to be direct revelation from God.

Consultation: A form of discussion between individuals and within groups which requires the subjugation of egotism so that all ideas can be shared and evaluated with frankness, courtesy, and openness of mind, and decisions arrived at can be wholeheartedly supported. Its guiding principles were elaborated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Continental Boards of Counsellors: An institution created in 1968 by the Universal House of Justice to extend into the future the work of the institution the Hands of the Cause of God, particularly its appointed functions of protection and propagation. With the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, there was no way for additional Hands of the Cause to be appointed. The duties of the Counsellors include directing the Auxiliary Boards in their respective areas, advising and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies, and keeping the Universal House of Justice informed concerning the conditions of the Faith in their areas. Counsellors are appointed for terms of five years.

Convention: A gathering called at a regional, national, or international level for consultation on matters affecting the welfare of the Bahá'í community and for the purpose, respectively, of electing delegates to a National Convention, electing the members of a National Spiritual Assembly, or electing the members of the Universal House of Justice.

German Templar Colony: Group of houses with red-tiled roofs at the foot of Mount Carmel that once housed members of the Society of the Temple, founded in Germany in the mid-1800s. Templers foregathered in Haifa in 1863 to await the second coming of Christ.

Hands of the Cause of God: Individuals appointed first by Bahá'u'lláh, and others named later by Shoghi Effendi, who were charged with the specific duties of protecting and propagating the Faith. With the passing of Shoghi Effendi there is no further possibility for appointing Hands of the Cause; hence, in order to extend into the future the important functions of propagation and protection, the Universal House of Justice in 1968 created Continental Boards of Counsellors and in 1973 established the International Teaching Centre which coordinates their work.

Holy Days: Eleven days commemorating significant Bahá'í anniversaries, on nine of which work is suspended.

Ḥuqúqu'lláh: Arabic for "the Right of God." As instituted in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, payment to "the Authority in the Cause to whom all must turn" (at present, the Universal House of Justice) of 19 percent of what remains to one's personal income after one's essential expenses have been covered. Funds generated by the payment of Ḥuqúqu'lláh are used for the promotion of the Faith and for the welfare of society.

International Teaching Centre: An institution established in 1973 by the Universal House of Justice to bring to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land and to provide for its extension into the future. The duties of the International Teaching Centre include coordinating, stimulating, and directing the activities of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and acting as liaison between them and the Universal House of Justice. The membership of the Teaching Centre comprises all the surviving Hands of the Cause and also nine Counsellors appointed by the Universal House of Justice. The seat of the International Teaching Centre is located at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel.

Knight of Bahá'u'lláh: Title initially given by Shoghi Effendi to those Bahá'ís who arose to open new territories to the Faith during the first year of the Ten Year Crusade (1953–1963) and subsequently applied to those who first reached those remaining unopened territories at a later date.

Lesser Peace: A political peace to be established by the nations of the

world in order to bring about an end to war. Its establishment will prepare the way for the Most Great Peace, a condition of permanent peace and world unity to be founded on the spiritual principles and institutions of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh and signaling humanity's coming of age.

Local Spiritual Assembly: The local administrative body in the Bahá'í Faith, ordained in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The nine members are directly elected by secret ballot each year at Riḍván from among the adult believers in a community.

Monument Gardens: Beautifully landscaped gardens at the heart of the Arc on Mount Carmel where befitting monuments have been erected over the graves of the daughter, wife, and youngest son of Bahá'u'lláh, and also the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Mount Carmel: The mountain spoken of by Isaiah as the "mountain of the Lord." Site of the Bahá'í World Centre including several Bahá'í holy places, the most important of which are the Shrine of the Báb and the Monument Gardens.

National Spiritual Assembly: The national administrative body in the Bahá'í Faith, ordained in the Bahá'í sacred writings, with authority over all activities and affairs of the Bahá'í Faith throughout its area. Among its duties are to stimulate, unify, and coordinate the manifold activities of Local Spiritual Assemblies and of individual Bahá'ís within its jurisdiction. The members of National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world constitute the electoral college for the Universal House of Justice. At Riḍván 1994, there were 172 National or Regional Spiritual Assemblies. See also Regional Spiritual Assembly.

Nineteen Day Feast: The principal gathering in each local Bahá'í community, every Bahá'í month, for the threefold purpose of worship, consultation, and fellowship.

Pioneer: Any Bahá'í who arises and leaves his or her home to journey to another country for the purpose of teaching the Bahá'í Faith. "Homefront pioneer" is used to describe those who move to areas within their own country that have yet to be exposed to the Bahá'í Faith.

Regional Spiritual Assembly: An institution identical in function to the National Spiritual Assembly but including a number of countries or regions in its jurisdiction, often established as a precursor to the formation of a National Spiritual Assembly in each of the countries it encompasses.

Riḍván: Arabic for "Paradise." The twelve-day festival (from 21 April through 2 May) commemorating Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of His mission to His companions in 1863 in the Garden of Riḍván in Baghdad.

Shoghi Effendi Rabbání: (1897–1957) The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921, designated in His Will and Testament as His successor in interpreting the Bahá'í writings and as Head of the Faith.

Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh: The resting place of Bahá'u'lláh's mortal remains, located near the city of Acre, Israel. The Shrine is the holiest spot on earth to Bahá'ís and a place of pilgrimage.

Shrine of the Báb: The resting place of the Báb's mortal remains, located on Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel, and a sacred site to Bahá'ís.

Tablet: Divinely revealed scripture. In Bahá'í scripture, the term is used to denote writings revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Universal House of Justice: Head of the Bahá'í Faith after the passing of Shoghi Effendi, supreme administrative body ordained by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The Universal House of Justice is elected every five years by the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies who gather at an International Convention. The House of Justice was elected for the first time in 1963 and occupied its permanent Seat on Mount Carmel in 1983.

Adapted from *A Basic Bahá'í Dictionary*, Wendi Momen, ed. (Oxford: George Ronald, 1989).

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