



ONE COUNTRY

"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens" – Bahá'u'lláh

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To be held in conjunction with the United Nations scheduled "Millennium Summit" in the year 2000, the proposed gathering would seek to lobby world leaders and highlight the importance of world civil society.

UNITED NATIONS – After many months of talk, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are moving ahead with a bold plan to hold an "Millennium NGO Forum" in the year 2000 that would seek to highlight the importance of world civil society in solving major global problems in the 21st century.

If the plan wins the kind of support its organizers hope for, it could lead to a large and diverse gathering of thousands of NGOs from all over the world. The meeting will correlate with the United Nations "Millennium Assembly" summit meeting scheduled for September 2000 at UN headquarters and is likely also to be held in New York. Its overall goal would be to consolidate the work of various NGO forums at UN conferences in the 1990s and lay the groundwork for even greater NGO activity and partnership with the UN in the coming decades.

The plan, put forward in outline form at an NGO meeting held at the UN on 15 July 1998, emerged after many meetings and consultations involving a cross-section of NGOs interested in the idea. While many of these were ad hoc, with NGOs and NGO networks from many sectors contributing ideas, the formal planning process took place under the leadership of the Task Force on UN Reform of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC (CONGO).

At the end of the 15 July meeting, which was attended by more than 100 NGO representatives, an interim steering committee was appointed by consensus. The committee

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The NGO UN Reform Task Force has held a series of meetings on the possibility of holding a Millennium NGO Forum. Shown above is the Task Force on 15 July 1998 at the UN.

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New Age, New Morals, New Leaders

To speak of "moral leadership" in today's world seems a contradiction in terms. Almost every day, headlines tell of the disgrace, downfall, imprisonment or forced resignation of a political, corporate, religious, or community leader somewhere.

The corruption of leadership takes many forms. There are those who seek to use positions of power to accumulate wealth, undermine rivals, or win sexual favors. There are those who use their authority to advance some particular cause at the expense of justice to other ideas. There are those who care more for partisan advantage than the discovery of truth. There are those who seek to dominate out of a base desire to manipulate and control others. And there are those who abuse positions of advantage simply because they have not reflected on the true purpose of leadership.

Morality in leadership does matter. In some countries, the collapse of entire economies can be traced to varying forms of government and/or corporate corruption. Other leaders have made war to retain political power, satisfy ego, or uphold the privilege of a particular tribe or class. On the local level, immoral leaders have deprived communities of funds for development, forced the adoption of ill-advised policies, and stirred ethnic or religious hatreds.

It would be difficult, given the historic record of venal, malevolent and self-serving leaders in all parts of the world, to say that the corruption of leadership is on the rise. It seems reasonable to suggest, however, that bad leadership has become more visible – an effect, perhaps, of advances in information technology, the rising influence of civil society, and the empowerment of people everywhere through better education.

This points to an important fact: we live in a new age, an age of transition from an old world order to a new one. Every day brings fresh evidence of the collapse of old ideas and institutions and the blossoming of new ones.

In response to the apparent rise of corrupt leadership worldwide, a number of groups and organizations have begun campaigns for greater transparency in decision-

making, for strengthening the rule of law, for judicial independence and other democratic reforms.

Such efforts are much needed. Yet they are mainly palliative and fail to address the fundamental question: what is moral leadership in an age of global interdependence?

For an answer, we must probe the nature of morality itself. Bahá'ís understand that human beings have a dual nature. One side is centered on the material world. It is, simply put, concerned with basic physical need: survival, food, shelter, and creature comforts. The other aspect of human reality is its spiritual side. This aspect, which stems from our God-created rational human soul, engenders love, compassion, and altruism.

Without this fundamental understanding, many efforts to promote morality will fail as they become mired in contemporary ideas about the relativism of values, rationalized by forces of materialistic self-interest, or picked apart by partisan wrangling. However, a proper understanding of the human spiritual reality, which is increasingly confirmed by scientific discoveries, offers a well-illuminated path to leadership that is genuinely moral.

In ages past, our spiritual reality found expression in the call to love one's neighbor or submit to God's will. In today's world, it finds its mature expression in the concept of the oneness of humanity, the defining principle for our age of global integration and interdependence.

In concrete terms, this expands the notion of love for one's neighbor to the scale of the global village. It calls for a new type of leader, one that can be defined as a "moral" leader.

Again, we must contrast the old with the new. For too long, leadership has been understood – by both leaders and followers – as power and control over others. Leaders in this mode have tended to debilitate those whom they are supposed to serve. In order to exercise control, such leaders too often sought to over-centralize the decision-making process or coerce others into agreement. While they may appear to listen carefully, they actually aim to advance preconceived ideas and to dominate

others. Various modes of leadership in this vein include autocracy, paternalism, and totalitarianism, as well as modes that employ the manipulation of mass media and various forms of “know-it-all expertism.”

The new paradigm for leadership means that leaders today must be chiefly concerned with giving service to their community – rather than advancing their own ideas, careers or sense of privilege. (To put it another way, the primary characteristic of a moral leader must be “one who serves the community most” rather than “one who dominates the community most.”) Their main obligation must be to the best interests of the whole, rather than to any particular party, ideology, tribe or corporation.

Other characteristics of moral leadership include a commitment to seeking the truth of a situation (rather than working from preestablished or partisan positions) before taking action, an emphasis on non-adversarial methods of decision-making, the ability to inspire and encourage constructive action at the grassroots of society, and a faculty to see “the end in the beginning” – in other words, the capacity for vision.

In general terms, moral leaders must embrace the progressive social ideas that stem from the principle of the oneness of humanity: they must express a commitment to human rights, possess an understanding of the tools necessary for promoting social cohesion and well-being, embrace unequivocally the equality of women and men, and dismiss completely any preferences based on race, ethnicity, religious belief or national origin.

The concept of the oneness of humanity will lead inevitably to questions about the role of political parties. Although political parties have had an historic role in promoting the interests of long-ignored constituencies and fostering fresh currents of thought, the new realities of our age, as well as changes in communications technology and organizational science, have made them increasingly redundant. Further, the negative aspects of partisanship – such as the tendency to promote particularistic interests over the good of the whole, the potential for influence buying, and the propensity to focus on winning the political fight instead of searching for truth – are increasingly the main output of partisanship.

Ultimately, then, it will be realized that partisanship is today mainly a force for disunity. And in our era of global integration, ecological interdependence and the presence

of once unimaginable weapons of mass destruction, our chief goal must be unity.

Perhaps the most important characteristic in defining moral leadership is truthfulness. “Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of the world of humanity,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “Without truthfulness, progress and success in all of the worlds of God are impossible for a soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also become realized.”

The problem today, of course, is to determine when leaders are sincere in their commitment to truth and when they are not – for all contemporary leaders pay homage to the ideal. In this regard, a proper understanding of the spiritual nature of reality is again helpful. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá indicates above, truthfulness stands at the root of other virtues. Elsewhere in the Bahá’í writings, we read that “... one’s righteous deeds testify to the truth of one’s words.” We can understand that we must look for a single standard of conduct in both public and private life, and for actions in all endeavors that speak of moral sincerity.

We return, then, to the reality of the human soul and the fundamental purpose of our existence, which is to acquire spiritual virtues. As individuals progress spiritually, they will develop the capacity to distinguish virtuous deeds from false rhetoric. *

The new paradigm for leadership means that leaders today must be chiefly concerned with giving service to their community – rather than advancing their own ideas, careers or sense of privilege.

RECOGNITION



In Pakistan, President Rafique Tarar (right) presented a Shield and Certificate of Merit for Social Work to a representative of the Bahá’í Local Spiritual Assembly of Rawalpindi on behalf of the Red Crescent Society on 17 June 1998.

NGOs and governments form a new coalition to promote religious tolerance

Some 200 representatives from various governments, non-governmental organizations and religious communities call for greater efforts to promote freedom of religion and belief, urging specifically that the UN office charged with monitoring religious intolerance be strengthened.

OSLO, Norway – The right to freedom of religion is surely one of the thorniest issues in international relations, concerning as it does the deepest beliefs of peoples and cultures and, all too often, touching on nerves made raw by long-running regional or religious conflicts.

So it is understandable, perhaps, that international efforts to monitor and prevent religious intolerance have sometimes been overlooked by governments and others, despite strong international declarations that clearly uphold the right of religious freedom or belief – and despite strong teachings by all of the religions that stress tolerance, peace and good will.

In August, however, a gathering of some 200 representatives from various governments, non-governmental organizations and religious communities issued a call for greater attention to the issue, urging specifically that the United Nations office charged with monitoring religious intolerance be strengthened. As significantly, perhaps, they also moved to form a new coalition aimed at bolstering such efforts.

Cosponsored by the Council for Religious and Lifestance Communities in Nor-

way, of which the Bahá'í community of Norway is a member, the Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief brought together a highly diverse and prominent group of government delegates, human rights experts, religious leaders, and NGO representatives from 12-15 August 1998.

In its final declaration, the group urged the world community to give increased financial and personnel support to the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, the main UN officer charged with monitoring human rights violations and concerns in the area of freedom of religion or belief. In this regard, the Government of Norway announced a grant of some US\$1.5 million to support the Special Rapporteur's office. The Government of Norway also gave complete financial support to the Conference.

More dramatic in some respects was the Conference's proposal to establish a coalition of "governments, religious or belief communities, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations" with the aim of giving ongoing support to the Special Rapporteur and other international institutions and instruments which aim to protect the freedom of religion or belief.

"The intention is to form the coalition as wide as possible," said Stig Utne, chair of the Host Committee.

As such, the Conference marks yet another example of the increasing partnership between governments and NGOs in addressing key international issues.

"Everyone, including the Special Rapporteur, concedes that the NGOs have a new place in this whole order," said David Little, a senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, a US government-sponsored research and training center, who was the lead US representative to the Conference. "The governments themselves can't do the job, especially in human rights and particularly in religious issues. Because the interested parties are usually NGO bodies, such as religious groups. So this is a very important development in deepening cooperation between governments and non-governmental groups."



UN High Commissioner of Human Rights Mary Robinson at the podium.

Indeed, the Conference was also noteworthy for the involvement of religious leaders from diverse communities – communities that in some parts of the world are in conflict or disharmony. Religious participants included representatives from the Bahá'í, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Moslem and Sikh communities. And many of the speeches and panel discussions at the Conference focused quite specifically on regional/religious conflicts or issues as they relate to human rights, an aspect that many participants said helped to create a new dialogue among faith groups on this issue.

"The particular difficulties surrounding freedom of religion and belief which, for so long, have inhibited interreligious conversation, no doubt have to do with the very profound issues and attitudes involved in religious belief or unbelief," said Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who was a keynote speaker. "The call of believer and unbeliever alike is to resist the degeneration of fundamental beliefs from their liberating potential into fundamentalist and dominating caricatures. Only in this way will authentic religious freedom be upheld."

A Strategic Plan

As outlined by the organizers, the Conference's main aim was to establish a new international coalition and develop a strategic plan to achieve real progress and practical support for Article 18 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination, which are the two main international instruments that uphold the right to religious freedom.

To that end, participants issued the Oslo Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief, a two-page call to action which reaffirms that every person has the right to freedom of religion or belief; recognizes that religions and beliefs teach peace and good will; and challenges "governments, religious bodies, interfaith associations, humanist communities, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions to create educational programs using the 1981 Declaration as a universal standard to build a culture of tolerance and understanding and respect between people of diverse beliefs."

"It is becoming increasingly clear that the promotion and defense of religious freedom is one of the most pressing items

on the international agenda," said Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Norway's minister of international development and human rights, who opened the Conference. "It also deserves higher priority. The work of promoting respect for human rights is rooted in a fundamental belief in human dignity. Thus, human rights are based on moral values. One of our overriding aims is to contribute to a world in which every human being is guaranteed the right to life, an opportunity to live in peace, freedom and security, and the fulfillment of basic needs. Respect for human rights is the foundation of a life of dignity. These are grand words, but they are true, and they should challenge us to action."

Ms. Johnson and others said that among the factors which have pushed religious freedom to the top of the international agenda are the end of the Cold War and the fall of communism, which have unleashed old ethnic and religious rivalries in many regions, the increasing use of religious and ethnic rivalries by leaders for political gain, and a general revival of religious feeling in many countries and regions that has sometimes expressed itself in extreme terms.

In his address Abdelfattah Amor, the current UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, said that these new realities have created an urgent necessity for action.

"Numerous countries have problems assimilating the human rights instruments, and religious persecutions continue, including everything from verbal intimidation to violence and terrorism," said Prof. Amor, a professor of international law at the University of Tunis Law School in Tunisia. "Lack of education focused on tolerance, especially to the young generations, is a main problem."

More resources are needed, Prof. Amor said, to counteract extremism, adding that the problem of terrorists who kill in the name of God is a main challenge for society. "Silence and indifference towards these actions will only increase the phenomenon," Prof. Amor said. "Tolerance towards extremism is tolerance for the intolerable. Extremism should be counteracted in every possible way and find its definitive place where it belongs, in our history."

Throughout the Conference, speakers suggested that real hope for progress lies in an interdisciplinary, cross-sectorial approach that will bring together not only the various actors – from governments to religious

"Everyone, including the Special Rapporteur, concedes that the NGOs have a new place in this whole order. The governments themselves can't do the job, especially in human rights and particularly in religious issues."

– David Little, a senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace

"Combatting religious intolerance and discrimination requires an interdisciplinary and long term approach including legislative measures, legal measures, but especially measures such as education and dialogue."
 – Bahiyyih G. Tahzib

organizations – but that also extends beyond simple support for legal instruments, encompassing new efforts to educate young people about the importance of tolerance.

"The critical issue is how to ensure effective international protection of freedom of religion or belief at the dawn of the 21st century," said Bahiyyih G. Tahzib, an expert on the rights of freedom of religion and belief from the Netherlands. "A host of recommendations have been made, many of them need to be more known and others require elaboration and further debate. Clearly, combatting religious intolerance and discrimination requires an interdisciplinary and long-term approach including legislative measures, legal measures, but especially measures such as education and dialogue."

Conference participants also called for new research into the issue of freedom of religion and belief, urging development of specialized informational resources and methodologies for collecting information, monitoring compliance and initiating comparative country studies. Conference organizers said they hope to establish, for example, a comprehensive site on the World Wide Web that would help provide timely information to decision-makers about intolerance.

"There is a growing body of religious, philosophical and scientific research into the root causes of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief," said Michael Roan, head of The Tandem Project, a US-based NGO that specializes in the issue of freedom of religion and belief and which was a co-organizer of the



Professor Abdelfattah Amor, UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance.

Oslo Conference, along with the Diacona College Centre in Norway. "But very little of this research has been made available in simplified form for analysis by the United Nations."

An opportunity for dialogue

The Conference itself was especially interesting because of the opportunities for dialogue that emerged. Between some of the groups represented in Oslo there are now, or have been in the past, tensions. China, for example, sent a delegation of experts; also present were representatives from exiled Tibetan groups who object to China's presence in Tibet. There were also many representatives from various countries and groups in the Middle East, including Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Iran.

The main Bahá'í representative to the Conference, Techeste Ahderom, spoke about the situation of Bahá'ís in Iran, suggesting that there is no better example of genuine religious intolerance, inasmuch as the fundamental teachings of Bahá'í Faith call for noninvolvement in politics and the Bahá'ís of Iran accordingly eschew any political ideology. Mr. Ahderom said that Bahá'ís in Iran are nevertheless persecuted, noting that as recently as July a Bahá'í was executed by the government. [See next page.] Present during the speech were members of an academic-oriented delegation from Iran. When asked about the situation of the Bahá'ís, one of the Iranian delegates said simply, "We cannot overprotect the minorities."

On the whole, the Conference provided a forum for the expression of tolerance and good will—another example of a growing pattern of constructive transcultural discourse among the world's peoples. Numerous times, religious leaders of all creeds emphasized that religions and beliefs should teach peaceful relations with others and that they as religious authorities in their communities should do their utmost to prevent religion from being misused to cause intolerance, discrimination and prejudice.

"Where the claim to universality of fundamental human rights is denied, refuted or reduced," said Gunnar Stålsett, the Bishop of Oslo (Lutheran) and a co-president of the Conference, "we need to struggle as individuals, faith or belief communities, and nations – not with weapons that kill but with words that heal – words of spiritual wisdom, political acumen and moral conviction."*

– Reported by Lisbeth Mattsson Johannensen

In Iran, one Bahá'í is executed and two more are sentenced to death, raising sharp doubts about the new Government's human rights policies

Early in the morning of 21 July 1998, Ruhullah Rawhani, a 52-year-old medical supplies salesman, father of four and member of Iran's Bahá'í community, was hanged in Mashhad, Iran. Later that morning, Mr. Rawhani's family was summoned to collect his body and required, despite their protests, to complete the burial within one hour, under the supervision of Government intelligence agents.

The killing of Mr. Rawhani was the first government execution of a Bahá'í in Iran in six years, and, coupled with the widespread arrest of some 32 Bahá'í educators in fourteen different cities throughout Iran in late September and early October, it has many people concerned about the possibility of a renewed effort by the Government to systematically persecute the Bahá'í community of Iran.

International organizations and governments around the world were quick to condemn the Rawhani execution, which was carried out solely because of Mr. Rawhani's religious belief.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, issued a press release stating it was "deeply disturbed" by the execution. "The Office of the High Commissioner is gravely concerned about the reported conditions that led to the execution, particularly the seeming absence of due process," said the release.

The governments of the United States, Canada, and Australia also quickly issued statements of strong condemnation. Each noted that the execution blatantly contradicts recent signs of liberalization and talk of greater respect for human rights in Iran.

"This brutal action is a grave disappointment," said Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy. "We have seen the beginnings of positive cultural and social change in Iran and we hold hopes for continuing progress."

In the United States, the White House issued a statement saying that "[t]he world has been encouraged by the recent statements from Iranian leaders about the need for rule of law and the rights of individuals. Such words have

little meaning so long as the human rights of the Iranian people, including the right to worship freely, are not upheld, and until the persecution of and violence against Iranians of the Bahá'í Faith stops."

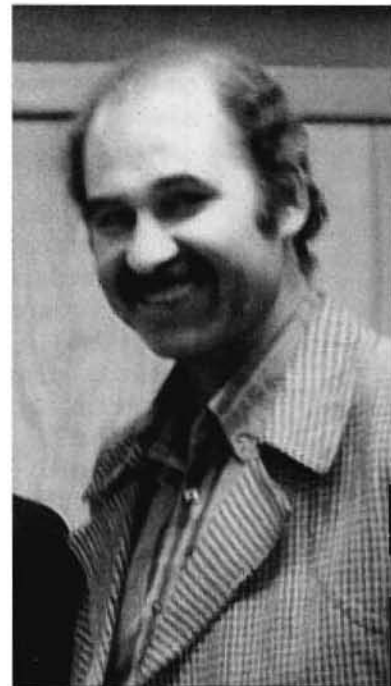
More death sentences

The Bahá'í International Community said at least two other Bahá'ís are being held under the sentence of death in Mashhad, in the province of Khurasan, raising fears that they may soon meet the same fate as Mr. Rawhani. Sentences of death were communicated orally by prison authorities in September to Sirus Zabihi-Moghaddam and Hedayat-Kashefi Najafabadi, two of the three Bahá'ís who were imprisoned and tried along with Mr. Rawhani. A third Bahá'í, Ataollah Hamid Nasirizadeh, was condemned to 10 years' imprisonment and will be transferred to a prison in Kerman.

As well, during a four-day period from 29 September through 2 October 1998, a sweeping series of raids was conducted by Iranian Government officers in 14 cities. Thirty-two Bahá'í educators were arrested. The educators were faculty members of the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education, a volunteer effort operated throughout Iran in private homes to provide education for Bahá'í youth, who are prevented from completing their high school education and from attending universities in Iran as part of the Government's ongoing persecution.

"These events suggest an intensification of efforts to terrorize members of the Faith and to suffocate the spiritual life of the Bahá'í community in the region by further curtailing activities aimed at providing education to Bahá'í children and youth," said Techeste

In another ominous sign, government officers in fourteen cities arrested 32 Bahá'í educators in late September-early October.



Ruhullah Rawhani

News accounts sometimes mischaracterize the Faith's independent nature

Within days of the execution of Ruhullah Rawhani in Iran, nearly all of the world's major international news services carried stories about the event, a clear mark of the world's concern about the ongoing persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran.

In several news accounts, however, it was erroneously stated that the Bahá'í Faith is an "offshoot" or "sect" of Islam. Such a reference to the Faith is inaccurate, akin to referring to Christianity as a "sect" or "offshoot" of Judaism or referring to Buddhism as a "denomination" of Hinduism.

Indeed, scholars have long recognized the independent nature of the Bahá'í Faith. In 1959, for example, noted historian Arnold Toynbee wrote: "Baháism [sic] is an independent religion on a par with Islam, Christianity and the other recognized world religions. Baháism is not a sect of some other religion; it is a separate religion, and it has the same status as the other recognized religions."

The distinction is important in the face of ongoing persecutions, in that statements from Iranian leaders have sought to dismiss the Bahá'í Faith as a heretical sect of Islam or a political movement, apparently to justify their persecution of Bahá'ís.

Ahderom, the Bahá'í International Community's main representative to the United Nations.

"The Government of Iran has been indicating to the world that the situation regarding the Bahá'ís had changed," said Mr. Ahderom. "However, the execution of Mr. Rawhani causes grave concern that, whatever the official assertion of the Iranian Government, the Bahá'í community of Iran remains unprotected, and officials in that country can persecute the Bahá'ís at will and with impunity."

Born into a Bahá'í family in the small settlement of Hellab near Isfahan, Mr. Rawhani was an active Bahá'í during his entire life. As a young man he was a member of various youth groups and friends say that he had a very calm and spiritual nature and was much loved by almost everyone he encountered. After his marriage, he moved to Chahishk, a remote village near Mashhad, and it was there that persecutions at the hands of fanatic Muslims began.

In 1984, Mr. Rawhani was arrested and imprisoned for more than a year. According to an account given by Mr. Rawhani's relatives in the Australian Bahá'í News, Mr. Rawhani was tortured during his first imprisonment. Mr. Rawhani was arrested a second time about four years ago. The charge was apparently related to his work in the conduct of purely religious activities, such as prayer meetings and children's classes. He was released after 24 hours.

Charged with converting a woman

Mr. Rawhani was arrested for a third time in September 1997 and placed in solitary confinement in Mashhad. He had been accused of "converting" a woman from Islam to the Bahá'í Faith. The woman, however, denied that she had converted; she explained that her mother was a Bahá'í and that she herself had been raised as a Bahá'í. She was not arrested.

Mr. Rawhani was kept incommunicado for the duration of his imprisonment and no information is available regarding his treatment in prison. There is no evidence that Mr. Rawhani was accorded any legal process, and no sentence was announced. It appears certain that he was not allowed access to a lawyer.

The night before his execution, someone from the Iranian Intelligence Department telephoned a Bahá'í in Mashhad stating that Mr. Rawhani was to be executed

the next day. Initially, this statement was not believed, as Bahá'ís in Iran have received similar calls previously in apparent attempts to frighten them.

Rope marks on his neck

The next morning, however, the family was called and told to come to the prison to collect Mr. Rawhani's body, when they were given an hour to bury him. Rope marks on his neck indicated he had been hanged.

The killing of Mr. Rawhani was the first official execution since 18 March 1992, when 52-year-old Bahman Samandari was secretly executed in Teheran's Evin prison. Mr. Samandari was also executed with no advance notice and in the absence of due process. A businessman from a distinguished Bahá'í family, Mr. Samandari was buried secretly on 20 March 1992 and his family was not notified until 5 April 1992.

In 1997, two Iranian Bahá'ís were killed under suspicious circumstances. On 4 July 1997, Masha'llah Enayati, a 63-year-old man, died in custody while in prison in Isfahan after being severely beaten. On 6 July 1997, Shahram Reza'i, a conscript in the army, was shot in the head by his superior officer at a military base near Rasht. The officer, who said the bullets were fired in error, was released a few days after a court excused him from paying the blood money normally required in such cases because the dead soldier was a Bahá'í.

Since 1979, more than 200 Bahá'ís in Iran have been executed by the Government, hundreds more have been imprisoned and thousands have lost jobs or access to education, all as part of a systematic campaign of religious persecution. Although most of the executions were carried out in the early to mid-1980s, and the number of Bahá'ís in prison has dwindled, the Bahá'í community remains without any form of official legal protection or rights.

Arbitrary detentions of Bahá'ís continue, with a marked increase in the number of short-term arrests in various areas of the country. During the past three years more than 200 Bahá'ís have been arrested and detained for periods ranging from 48 hours to six months in cities such as Yazd, Isfahan, Simnan, Babul, Kirmanshah, Mashhad, Shiraz, Tankabun, Ahvaz, Kerman, Karaj, Qa'im Shahr and Teheran. Prior to the arrests of the 32 educators, at least 14 Bahá'ís were being held in prison for their religious beliefs. *

In Guyana, the use of moral “generative themes” propels a project for youth



The training offered by “On the Wings of Words” makes use of the arts, such as songs, skits and dance, to convey ideas. Shown above is a singing group preparing to demonstrate songs at a training session for facilitators.

PLAISANCE, Guyana – Although reading is not her main subject, teacher Audrie Campbell knew three years ago that something was wrong with her students almost as soon as she returned to her home economics classroom at the community secondary school here in this suburb of Georgetown, the nation’s capital.

Ms. Campbell, who is now 45, had been away from teaching for about 14 years, operating a small grocery store and haberdashery shop. Economic times were tough here in the 1980s and running her own business seemed like a good way to make ends meet.

But upon stepping back into the classroom in 1995, Ms. Campbell immediately noticed that many of her students struggled much more than her students had in the 1970s. “They just weren’t performing in my subject area, so I wanted to know what the problem was,” she said. “And I found the problem was that they could not read.”

Not one to shrug off a problem as someone else’s responsibility, Ms. Campbell decided to start her own remedial reading class. She sought instruction from a local church group that had just started up a literacy teacher-training program in response to a new national literacy campaign. And then she invited her students, who ranged in age from 11 to 16 years old, to come in during the lunch break for extra reading help.

In the beginning, the results were not par-

ticularly good. The training she had received focused on the mechanical aspects of reading, with an emphasis on phonics. “But I thought the kids were too big for phonics.”

So when she saw a pamphlet about another program that offered free training in how to teach literacy, she enrolled immediately. That program, known as “On the Wings of Words,” had just been started up by the Bahá’í community of Guyana, also in response to the national campaign for improved literacy.

The instructional methods she learned through “On the Wings of Words” were entirely different. The methods took a dynamic, participatory approach to teaching reading, and included the use of skits, songs and other creative teaching aids. The methods also emphasized the importance of teaching moral values, along with basic literacy, as a means of motivating and empowering students.

These methods, Ms. Campbell said, were immediately successful. She moved her reading class to her garage and held it daily after school. She started with 12 students, but soon began holding two classes, so great was the demand. She provided these services to her pupils free of charge, obtaining her reward in the progress of her students.

“I felt happy because the children not only finished my school, but some went on to institutions of higher learning,” said Ms. Campbell, who is not a Bahá’í and who

“On the Wings of Words” combines efforts across several theme areas – literacy, moral education, and the use of mass media to recruit volunteers – to obtain a greater synergy for success.

"On the Wings of Words' – is not 'about' the best – it definitely is the best organized response that we've had in the nation to the literacy problem."

**– Dale Bisnauth,
Guyana's minister
of education.**

has continued with the "On the Wings of Words" project since. "And this is very significant. Because most of the students at a community high school like ours – which is considered a lower level school – are not expected to go on."

Ms. Campbell's experience mirrors that of many educators and others in Guyana recently. Until the mid-1990s, people in this small tropical Caribbean country took comfort in the widely accepted statistic that, despite various economic hardships, theirs was one of the most literate nations in the region, with an "official" literacy rate of more than 98 percent. (Indeed, many international reference works continue to accept this figure. The prestigious 1998 United Nations Development Report, for example, cites a 98.1 percent literacy rate.)

But in 1994, concerned that young people were not performing as well as they should have, the Ministry of Education commissioned a survey. Undertaken by Zellynne Jennings, then a professor of education at the University of Guyana, it was discovered that for out-of-school youth between the ages of 14 and 25, upwards of 89 percent were "functionally illiterate."

"If you were just going by standard literacy tests, on whether people could write their names, the percentages were quite high," said Prof. Jennings, who is now a literacy consultant working throughout the Caribbean. "But when we asked whether people can actually understand what they

read and do simple arithmetic computation, the story was different." Jennings believes the drop in literacy was caused by the difficult economic times in the 1980s that left many schools without good teachers and forced many young people to drop out of school in search of work.

When the results of the study were released in 1996, it led to some serious national introspection and analysis. A government-sponsored national literacy task force was formed, for example, and a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) launched projects to promote literacy.

By nearly all accounts, among the most successful of these efforts was the "On the Wings of Words" literacy program.

"Breaking new ground"

"The program originated by the Bahá'í community – 'On the Wings of Words' – is not 'about' the best – it definitely is the best organized response that we've had in the nation to the literacy problem," said Dale Bisnauth, Guyana's minister of education. "In a real sense 'On the Wings of Words' is really breaking new ground. We have never had anything like it."

Indeed, the project – which has trained more than 1,000 literacy facilitators and led to the holding of classes for more than 3,000 young people – has received similar praise from nearly every quarter. The national media have run positive stories and editorials about the project, educational administrators have called it a model effort, and the facilitators and students who have participated tell of many rewards.

The project recruits unpaid volunteer literacy facilitators through the mass media and other publicity methods. The volunteers are then given a week of free training in the summer and administrative support over the course of a year as they work to organize small-scale literacy classes in their home communities. Like Bahá'í literacy and educational projects in many parts of the world, "On the Wings of Words" is an integrated project, combining efforts across several theme areas to obtain a greater synergy for success. Specifically, "On the Wings of Words" integrates the training of volunteer literacy facilitators with the promotion of spiritual and moral values.

"We make it clear, in introductory meetings held five weeks before the training, that it has a spiritual basis," said Pamela O'Toole, a member of the Bahá'í literacy task force



Literacy facilitator Audrie Campbell, left, presents a graduation certificate to Jonelle Sealey, one of her students.

that oversees the project. "We talk about a bird having two wings. One is the mechanics of reading. But that alone is not going to change the lives of children, because of the many other problems in their lives. So we explain that you have to look at the other wing, which we believe is moral and spiritual education."

"Generative Themes"

According to Ms. O'Toole and others on the task force, both the course for the facilitators — and the classes that they ultimately conduct for the children and youth — stress three basic moral themes, which are drawn from the Bahá'í writings. These themes are: "Man is a noble being," "Our actions affect others," and, "We are in control of our own actions."

"These themes permeate everything in 'Wings of Words,'" said Ms. O'Toole, a native of Scotland who moved to Guyana with her English husband, Brian, in 1978. "We use Paulo Freire's technique of generative themes, where you discuss issues, using these three themes. And this is very empowering for the youth. It is not something they do in school. So a lesson begins with generative themes. 'How do we know what is right and wrong?' 'How can we have strength to choose the right thing to do?' Issues like that."

Outsiders agree that the use of moral themes has paid off. "It is a good project because it has attracted a number of children who have not been doing well at school and some who have actually dropped out," said Samuel Small, director of the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education at the University of Guyana, which offers all facilitators who graduate from the course — and follow through with a year's worth of classes — a special literacy instructor's certificate. "And I can say that at the graduation exercises we have held, the children have produced stories, poems, skits... which indicated that they have developed a lot of self-confidence, apart from their improved literacy levels."

With a parallel focus on the mechanics of reading, the course uses books and workbooks developed by the Bahá'í literacy task force. The "Wings of Words" materials are designed to lead facilitators through a course with students, even if they have had very little previous training in education. Indeed, although most of the facilitators are educators, volunteers come from a wide variety of professions, includ-



ing bank clerks, health care workers and even a veterinarian.

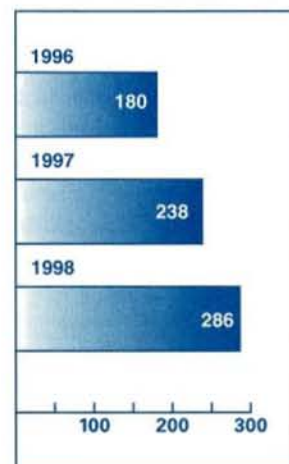
Eileen Grant, for example, is a 60-year-old clerical secretary who took a "Wings of Words" facilitator's course in 1996 and has since offered free classes to about 80 children in her Georgetown neighborhood. "I was privileged to read at an early age and I thought it was frightening that so many young people of Guyana cannot read," she said. "So I wanted to help."

Ms. Grant, like Ms. Campbell, is not a Bahá'í. But she also finds the use of spiritually oriented themes completely in accord with her own beliefs as a Christian. "I entirely agree with them," she said. "You need to know other things in life, so that reading can be beneficial. And if you know right from wrong, and you can read as well, you've got a pretty good chance of going down the right road."

Most of the rewards, of course, go to the young people who participate in the local classes. Jonelle Sealey is a 10-year-old girl who has been one of Ms. Campbell's students in Plaisance. Before the classes, she could not read well and did not enjoy reading. She said the Wings of Words classes given by Ms. Campbell were more helpful than traditional classes at school because "the teacher moves with you step by step, and if you don't learn, she will go back with you and teach you other words."

As a result, she has now grown to love reading. "I used to just play all the time, or sit and listen to music," said Jonelle. "But now if I have spare time I read." *

Among those who took the training session for facilitators last summer were a group of US Peace Corps volunteers. For the last three years, "On the Wings of Words" training has become a standard element of the eight-week in-country training that US Peace Corps volunteers receive in Guyana.



Number of literacy facilitators trained in 1996, 1997, and 1998 in 5-day sessions by "On the Wings of Words." In all, more than 1,000 facilitators have received training.

Work begins on a "Millennium NGO Forum"

The plan seeks to combine and consolidate a wide range of proposals for an end-of-the-millennium gathering of civil society and accompanying calls for the creation of an ongoing international "people's assembly" at the United Nations.

Millennium, continued from page one

will seek further to define the plan and make a concrete recommendation for the formal election of an executive committee to carry it out. Then, in a meeting that has been tentatively scheduled for 1-2 December 1998 at the UN in New York, the recommendations will be openly consulted on by a diverse group of NGOs, gathered from as wide a base as possible, and the executive committee will be elected.

The proposal for a Millennium NGO Forum comes partly in response to the call last year by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan for the holding of a "people's millennium assembly" as a companion event to his proposed "millennium assembly" for UN member states in September 2000. In a resolution last year, the UN General Assembly agreed to the concept of having a "millennium assembly" in conjunction with its regular meeting in September 2000, and to include a summit segment, called the "millennium summit." The idea of a parallel NGO assembly, however, has not yet been formally addressed by UN member states.

At the same time, the plan seeks to combine and consolidate a wide range of proposals for some sort of end-of-the-millennium gathering of civil society and accompanying calls for the creation of an ongoing international "people's assembly" at the United Nations.

Indeed, one of the key aspects of the work undertaken by the CONGO Task Force on UN Reform was the degree to which it was able to obtain support for a single culminating event from the various non-governmental groups and interested individuals who were putting forward various ideas and proposals of their own.

"We're hoping now that this will be it, a basis for unity of all of our efforts," said Harry Lerner, director of the Campaign for a More Democratic United Nations (CAMDUN), one of a number of NGOs that had already been working to organize some sort of millennium people's assembly.

CAMDUN, said Dr. Lerner, had worked closely with others since the Earth Summit + Five meeting at the United Nations in New York in June 1997 to create

an "earth action coalition." It won the support of some 1,600 NGOs in 130 countries, he said, and this network evolved into something called the Millennium People's Assembly Network, which has now given its support to the Millennium NGO Forum plan unveiled on 15 July.

Other groups around the world that are seeking similar goals have likewise given tacit support to the Millennium NGO Forum proposal. A group of NGOs working in Geneva and Canada, for example, is planning to hold a "World Civil Society Conference" in Montreal in December 1999, while a coalition of Korean-based NGOs has scheduled a major conference on "The Role of NGOs in the 21st Century" in Seoul, Korea, in October 1999, said Angus Archer, head of a United Nations Association-Canada project entitled "Civil Society and the United Nations."

Now, according to Mr. Archer, both of these gatherings are likely to become "preparatory" conferences for the culminating Millennium NGO Forum as proposed on 15 July. Given all of the various discussions worldwide about NGOs, civil society and the importance of their participation, coupled with the general interest in the millennium, a Millennium NGO Forum at the UN that ties all of these themes together "could be very big," said Mr. Archer.

A departure from the past

The plan put forth by the CONGO Task Force in July suggests that NGOs should consider holding a major meeting two or three months in advance of the UN Millennium Summit in September in order to prepare a "consolidated report" of NGOs on the state of the world and the opinions of civil society for presentation to the governments at the Millennium Summit.

Such a procedure would be something of a departure from past NGO forums at UN world conferences where NGOs have met simultaneously and in parallel with governments. In such instances, final, unified NGO proposals for action emerged at the end of the process, often just as government representatives were going home.

Under this proposal, "issues can be

A World Wide Web site at <http://www.ngo.org/millennium.htm> has been established to provide information about the plans for a Millennium NGO Forum. The ONE COUNTRY website at <http://www.onecountry.org> will also carry continuing reports.

thrashed out in advance so that when the UN Secretary General gives his consideration to a report to the governments in mid-summer, he will already have our input," said Techeste Ahderom, who chairs the CONGO Task Force on UN Reform, at the July meeting. "When the heads of state and government meet in September 2000, we will lobby them" with a representative statement of NGO concerns from around the world.

Other aspects of the July proposal call for a series of regional meetings of NGOs before the year 2000. As noted, many NGO gatherings with similar goals are already being organized on an ad hoc basis, and the proposal would seek to bring together the results of these various consultations. The plan also urges local NGOs to hold other gatherings at the local level on millennium issues. The results of such local consultations would be transmitted up through the national and regional level meetings and, finally, to the culminating Millennium NGO Forum.

A Slow Birth

In part because of the great diversity of interests of NGOs, disagreements about how global issues should be approached, and the lack of any formal mechanism for NGOs to collaborate and coordinate their efforts, it took considerable time for the Millennium NGO Forum proposal to solidify. While a number of groups and individuals had proposed a wide range of plans and proposals, none had managed until the 15 July meeting to achieve any sort of consensus among NGOs, and especially among the core group of active NGOs at the UN.

Into the breach stepped CONGO, one of the oldest and perhaps the best organized formal grouping of NGOs. Founded in 1948, CONGO is composed of roughly 300 international NGOs and NGO confederations that have been recognized by the UN and granted the right to enter into consultations with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Through its Task Force on UN Reform, it began to reach out to other NGOs with a series of meetings in early 1998.

By many accounts, Mr. Ahderom, who is the main representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the UN, played a key role in drawing into the planning process other groups of NGOs, from those groups that have been accorded recognition by the UN's Department of Public Information (DPI), known as DPI-NGOs, to the ad hoc coalitions, such as the Millennium

People's Assembly Network, that have been interested in such a convocation.

"The way it is now evolving, where there are multiple goals and a number of groups that are going to try and integrate and interlink their common goals into a millennium NGO forum, is the right route," said William Pace, director of the World Federalist Movement, who has been following the process closely. "Techeste was able, I think, to help integrate a number of different initiatives that normally would have competed and probably cancelled each other out."

According to Mr. Pace and others, the next major hurdle in the process of organizing an all-encompassing Millennium NGO Forum will be to ensure the inclusion of a wide range of NGO representatives from well outside the usual circle of UN-oriented NGOs, especially from Southern countries, as well as groups whose focus has been on specific issue areas, such as NGOs focusing on the issues of women or environment.

"In the past, some of the organizing committees for NGO forums have not been effective," said Anita Nayar, the associate director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), which has been one of the most active and effective NGOs at recent UN world conferences. "They haven't really created a process that is flexible and open, particularly for Southern participation."

The plan seeks to ensure inclusive participation by having the interim steering committee create a "Planning Consultative Council" by "nominating" representatives from as wide a range of respected and active NGO groups and networks as possible. This Council would "elect" a much smaller "Millennium NGO Forum Executive Committee," which would be charged with actually organizing the Forum.

Members of the interim steering committee, as elected on 15 July, are: Mr. Ahderom; CONGO President Afaf Mahfouz; DPI-NGO Executive Committee Chairperson Elaine Valdov; Robert Wheeler of the Millennium People's Assembly Network; and Esmeralda Brown and Felix Dodds, co-chairs of the Commission on Sustainable Development NGO Steering Committee. *



The United Nations in New York, site of the scheduled Millennium Assembly in September 2000, which would be a focus for the proposed Millennium NGO Forum.

Authentic Morality

Review, continued from back page.

"The most specific goal of morality is to establish authentic relationships with other human beings."

–William S. Hatcher

nature, it is intrinsic and, since it is shared by all humans, it is universal."

This, of course, is all quite similar to what has been taught by most of the world's religions. And such ideas have also been hotly disputed by materialistic philosophers who argue that there is no God (or no reliable proof of God) or any evidence of the human soul, and so on. Yet it would be wrong to say that Dr. Hatcher, who is a Bahá'í, looks to the past for his ideas, and that his call for the acceptance of absolute truths and universal values is a return to traditionalism.

Rather, Dr. Hatcher says he has drawn on and been inspired by the Bahá'í writings for the insights that have led to his new formulation. Further, *Love, Power and Justice* is distinguished for its almost exclusive reliance on pure logic for its conclusions.

Indeed, what makes the book so important is its use of new forms of logic, based

on mathematical concepts discovered within the last 100 years, that, in subsequent sections, are used to prove the existence of a universal, unique and uncreated Creator [see below] and, by logical inference from that, the existence of a supreme and universal system of values. Dr. Hatcher reasons, for example, that since God is the unique, universal Cause, God must also be the most refined entity in existence and, accordingly, the most valued entity in existence.

With these conclusions established, Dr. Hatcher then fills out the rest of his book with an exposition of what such a reality must mean for human morality – deriving what he considers to be "authentic" morality from this hierarchy of values.

Authentic morality begins with our relationship with God, as the highest value in the universe, and our relationship with other humans, as the highest created value. "Since the human being is the supreme value in creation, it is our interactions with other humans that have the greatest degree of moral implication,"

INSIGHT

A new "proof" of God's existence?

In *Love, Power and Justice: the Dynamics of Authentic Morality*, as well as in several earlier works, Dr. William S. Hatcher outlines a simple logical proof for the existence of God, an accomplishment made possible, he said, by reexamining a classic proof of God offered by the great Muslim philosopher Avicenna (ibn Sina, 980-1037) and applying to it some new logical tools derived from recent developments in mathematics.

"Up until the modern period, the logic that was used in philosophy was Aristotelean logic, which is the logic of attributes," said Dr. Hatcher in a recent interview. "In the late 19th century, however, there was an explosion of logical and mathematical ideas and discoveries." Among these new ideas is the logic of relationships.

"The use of Aristotelean logic in the many previous proofs of God is a major limitation," he said. "You can't really prove God logically with just the logic of attributes. If you try, you end up with the ontological proof, which is not really convincing."

"The logic of relations, I feel, is the single greatest intellectual advance in the history of humankind," Dr. Hatcher added. "To give an example: the whole field of computers is based on the logic of relationships."

By applying the logic of relations, Dr. Hatcher has been able to update Avicenna's proof, which is in some ways itself based on Aristotle's "first cause" argument. The updated proof, Dr. Hatcher says, is now something a modern logician would find incontrovertibly true, given its

three assumptions, which are:

1) Everything in the universe is either preceded by a cause or else contains within itself a sufficient reason for its existence.

2) For every system or composite phenomenon, any cause for the system is also a cause for every part of the system. (Every material thing, except possibly the elementary particles of quantum physics, is composite.)

3) The existence of a whole system cannot precede the existence of its components (or, he writes, "the constitution of a whole obviously supposes and depends upon the prior or simultaneous existence of its components.")

The proof applies modern rules of logic to these three assumptions, which Dr. Hatcher says are nothing more than obvious formulations of the scientific method. The reasoning can be summarized as follows: First, no composite phenomenon can be self-caused, because of the second and third assumptions. Second, since the entire universe is composite, it cannot be self-caused. It must be caused by something else, according to the first assumption.

Further reasoning proves that this something else "is a unique, non-composite, uncaused universal cause and thus the cause of everything that exists – and that is God," Dr. Hatcher said. "Moreover, granted the three premises, the denial of which would lead in each case to a highly unreasonable proposition, the entire proof is as incontrovertible as one plus one equals two." *

he writes. "So much is this so, that we can say that the most specific goal of morality is to establish authentic relationships with other human beings.

"The mark of authenticity in interhuman relationships is the presence of self-sacrificing love or altruism. Non-authentic relationships are based on various forms of egotism and self-interest and are characterized by conflict, disharmony, manipulation, cruelty, jealousy and the like."

In examining further what such a concept of authentic relationships must mean in terms of moral actions in society, for example, Dr. Hatcher takes a look at other models of reality and finds them deficient. He is especially concerned with any ideology or system that holds ideas or things to be more important than human beings.

For example, he writes, although all religions have taught of the necessity of authentic relationships (such as Christ's commandment to "love God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as they self"), he concludes that many religious groups have become more concerned with doctrine, rejecting authentic morality and instead defining morality as a set of rules or beliefs that must be accepted above all else, even if doing so means harming others.

"Indeed, militant and exclusivist fundamentalist ideology seems to have become predominant within many of the world's major religions in these closing years of the twentieth century," he writes.

Dr. Hatcher likewise examines various humanistic ideologies. Communism and other collectivist ideologies were doomed to fail, he suggests, because they hold that the only possible source of individual value is what may be attributed by society, rather than the intrinsic value that stems from the God-created soul. "We must each conceive of ourselves as having value, for to consider oneself worthless is to perpetrate spiritual or psychological suicide," Dr. Hatcher writes. Since the only source of self worth in a collectivist society is, by definition, the value attributed to the individual by society, the individual soon realizes, whatever the rhetoric, that his or her value is determined by his or her position in the status hierarchy.

In this situation, he writes, "[p]ower and

authority allow us to compel others to recognize our worth." Hence the tendency to seek dominance over others, which causes great unhappiness and inherent instability.

The ideology of individualism in the West is also flawed, Dr. Hatcher believes. "Recall that individualism gives value to personal ability that is demonstrably above the perceived norm in society," he writes. "Individualism is the supervaluation of the special. In a society where all accept the individualistic notion of value, we can avoid the self-perception of worthlessness only by demonstrating special ability in some way. This is done primarily through competition, i.e. by constantly striving to outperform others and thereby to demonstrate our superior ability in a given area of endeavor."

One problem is that sometimes the optimal strategy for winning a competition is sabotage or corruption – and, without authentic morality, there is in the end no ethical reason to abstain from such behavior.

A value system based on authentic relationships – and in particular an authentic relationship with God – gives rise instead to the pursuit of excellence, whereby one's self-worth is measured not through competition with others but by the degree to which an individual improves his or her talents (or, rather, strives to develop one's God-given qualities).

There is much more to this book than outlined here. Dr. Hatcher spends considerable time looking at how his theory of authentic morality applies to questions regarding the pursuit of power and the creation of justice. Power should be used only to promote justice, never for revenge or for purely selfish motives, for example.

In contemporary philosophy, then, the metaphysical theory outlined in *Love, Power and Justice* is in a category virtually by itself, diametrically opposed to the dominant schools of post-modernistic relativism, materialism and deconstructionism.

The book adds up to a powerful exposition on global ethics – even though it has none of the usual set of "dos and don'ts" that one usually associates with other attempts to formulate a universal prescription for living. Rather, Dr. Hatcher presents us with something much more intriguing: a new framework for ethics that he believes can be logically proved to be universal and authentic. *

"Since the human being is the supreme value in creation, it is our interactions with other humans that have the greatest degree of moral implication. So ... the most specific goal of morality is to establish authentic relationships with other human beings."

– William S. Hatcher

Correction:

In the April-June 1998 issue of ONE COUNTRY, the page one photograph caption should have stated that the Grameen Bank is in Bangladesh, not Pakistan. We regret the error.

Using logic in the search for supreme values

What is Justice? What is Truth? What is right and wrong? Is there a God?

These questions have engrossed philosophers and thoughtful people everywhere since ancient times. The answers have come in great variety, from Plato's theory of ideal forms to more recent concepts of cultural relativism and situational ethics.

The relevance of these questions today is highlighted by discussions about the need for a new paradigm of global ethics and the accompanying search for universal values. These discussions are perhaps most heated in areas like human rights, where there is continuing disagreement over the degree to which all possess the same rights or whether cultural and religious factors give rise to different rights for different groups of people. But the questions – and the answers they generate – also loom large in the background of contemporary debates over the environment, educational methodology and media ethics – not to mention more straightforward issues like military intervention and national sovereignty.

For these reasons even the most hard-headed of policy makers, as well as thinking people in virtually any culture, will find new and important ideas in the latest book from William S. Hatcher, an American-born mathematician, philosopher and educator at Laval University in Quebec, Canada.

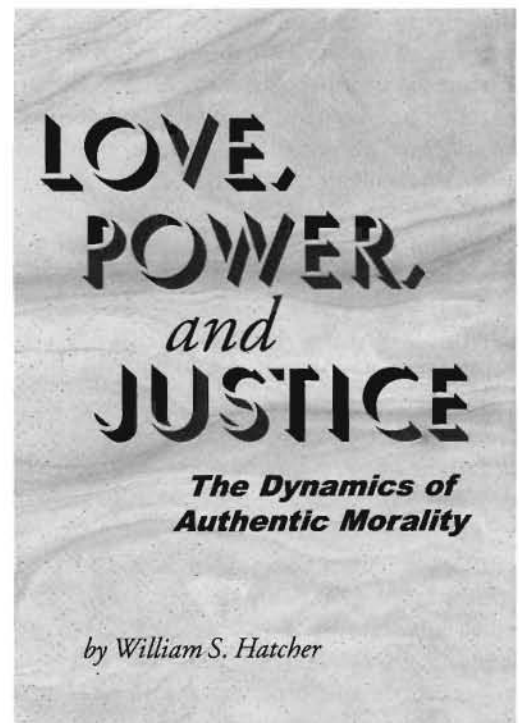
Love, Power and Justice: The Dynamics of Authentic Morality offers a bold and creative philosophical framework for understanding these great questions and more. Quite specifically, the book seeks to define the nature of "authentic morality" – a term that Dr. Hatcher uses to describe a moral system that conforms with "an accurate perception of the structure of reality."

In the process, Dr. Hatcher outlines a series of philosophic constructs that assert with convincing logic the existence of an all-powerful Creator, the ultimate nobility of the human being, and the necessity for viewing altruistic love as the guiding value in human relationships. Dr. Hatcher's work also defines the legitimate use of power and the prerequisites for establishing justice.

The logic he employs goes far to prove

the universality of such values and, by extension, to establish the universal nature of human rights, the downfall of cultural relativism and the demise of situational ethics. Another by-product is a stunning critique of some of this century's most vibrant ideologies, including fundamentalist religion, collectivist economics and the currently reigning idea that individualistic competition promotes society's best development.

The book begins in a straightforward and direct manner, with the simple assumption that the ultimate source of all intrinsic values is God, "for He is the Creator who has alone determined the inner structure and degree of refinement of each entity in existence."



As the supreme value in existence, the Creator by definition becomes the ultimate end and goal of all human moral striving, Dr. Hatcher says. Further, he asserts, "[b]ecause the 'reality of man' (the human soul) is capable of reflecting all the attributes of God, the human being is the apex of creation" and "the highest created value." He continues that since "the God-given value of humankind is inherent in our essential

Review, continued on page 14

***Love, Power and
Justice: the
Dynamics of
Authentic
Morality***

**By William S.
Hatcher**

**Bahá'í Publishing
Trust**

Wilmette, Illinois