



ONE COUNTRY

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

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In a ceremony broadcast live around the world by satellite and Internet webcast, some 3,000 Bahá'ís from 180 countries celebrate as a majestic symbol of "unity and peace" is offered to the world.



On 23 May 2001, some 3,000 Bahá'ís from 180 countries ascended Mount Carmel, climbing towards the golden-domed Shrine of the Báb, one of the most holy places in the world for Bahá'ís.

HAIFA, Israel — Like many of the several thousand Bahá'ís who came from around the world in May to the inauguration of a series of majestic garden terraces on Mount Carmel, Alemitu Chuffa could hardly believe her eyes when she saw them for the first time.

"I started crying," said the 53-year-old homemaker from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. "I did not expect them to be this beautiful. It is like heaven."

Others had similar reactions upon seeing the terraces, which extend nearly a kilometer up the mountainside, are divided into 19 levels, and feature numerous stone stairways, marble fountains and iron ornaments, as well as an extensive selection of plants and flowers.

Salomeea Romanescu of Romania compared them to "paradise on earth."

"The sound of the water is like a divine song," said the 37-year-old educator from Bucharest. "Combined with the fragrance of the flowers and the harmony of the colors, all these sensations, they give you a feeling of plenitude and peace."

"I was wanting all my life to feel such a feeling of peace and harmony and I am very happy now to be able to come here and experience it," she added.

Indeed, Bahá'ís view the terraces — which, along with two new administrative buildings, were built over the last 10 years at a cost of some US\$250 million in donations — as a gift of peace to the world at large — and the fulfillment of religious prophecy.

Terraces, continued on page 8

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On the occasion of the official opening of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb

The following is a statement of the Universal House Justice, the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, as read 22 May 2001 "On the occasion of the official opening of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb."

With joyful and thankful hearts, we welcome all who have come from near and far to join us on this auspicious occasion for the Bahá'ís of the world. We acknowledge with deep appreciation the presence of so many distinguished guests.

A century and a half have passed since that unspeakable tragedy in the northwest of Persia when the Báb faced the volley fired at Him from the rifles of 750 soldiers. The soldiers had followed the orders of the highest authorities in the land. The Báb's mangled body was then thrown on the side of a moat outside the city, abandoned to what His cold-blooded persecutors thought would be a dishonorable fate. They had hoped thus to put an end to the growing influence of His teachings on masses of people throughout the country. These masses had accepted, in the face of intense persecution, the Báb's claim to prophethood, and their lives were being transformed spiritually and morally as He prepared them for what He said was the dawn of a new age in which a world civilization would be born and flourish. The expectations that stirred countless hearts were heightened even more sublimely by the Báb's announcement that One greater than He would soon arise, One who would reveal the unparalleled character of the promised world civilization that would signify the coming of age of the entire human race.

We are met not to lament the tragedy of the Báb's martyrdom and the persecutions that followed; rather have we come to celebrate the culmination and acknowledge the meaning of an unprecedented project that had its beginning over a century ago. It was then that Bahá'u'lláh, Whom the Ottoman authorities had banished to Acre to serve out His days in confinement, visited Mount Carmel and selected the spot where the remains of His Herald would be interred. We

humbly trust that the wondrous result achieved by the completion of the nineteen terraced gardens, at the heart of which rises the Shrine of the Báb, is a fitting fulfillment of the vision initiated by Bahá'u'lláh.

The sufferings sustained by the Báb so as to arouse humanity to the responsibilities of its coming age of maturity were themselves indications of the intensity of the struggle necessary for the world's people to pass through the age of humanity's collective adolescence. Paradoxical as it may seem, this is a source of hope. The turmoil and crises of our time underlie a momentous transition in human affairs. Simultaneous processes of disintegration and integration have clearly been accelerating throughout the planet since the Báb appeared in Persia. That our Earth has contracted into a neighborhood, no one can seriously deny. The world is being made new. Death pangs are yielding to birth pangs. The pain shall pass when members of the human race act upon the common recognition of their essential oneness. There is a light at the end of this tunnel of change beckoning humanity to the goal destined for it according to the testimonies recorded in all the Holy Books.

The Shrine of the Báb stands as a symbol of the efficacy of that age-old promise, a sign of its urgency. It is, as well, a monument to the triumph of love over hate. The gardens which surround that structure, in their rich variety of colors and plants, are a reminder that the human race can live harmoniously in all its diversity. The light that shines from the central edifice is as a beacon of hope to the countless multitudes who yearn for a life that satisfies the soul as well as the body.

This inextinguishable hope stems from words such as these from the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh: "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 has been infused into all created things." May all who strive, often against great odds, to uphold principles of justice and concord be encouraged by these assurances.

In reflecting on the years of effort invested in this daunting project, we are

moved to express to the people of Haifa the warmth of the feeling in our hearts. Their city will for all time be extolled by the Bahá'ís everywhere as the place in which the mortal remains of the youthful Prophet-Herald of their Faith finally found refuge, and this after half a century of having to be secretly moved for protection from one place to another in His native land. The patience and cordiality shown towards the Bahá'ís throughout the most difficult years of the construction work exemplify the spirit of goodwill in which so much of the world

stands so greatly in need. Haifa is providentially situated on Mount Carmel, with its immortal associations with saintly visionaries, whose concern throughout the ages was largely focused on the promise of peace. May Haifa achieve wide renown not just as a place of natural beauty but more especially as the city of peace.

Let the word go forth, then, from this sacred spot, from this Mountain of the Lord, that the unity and peace of the world are not only possible but inevitable. Their time has come.*

HEALTH

Bahá'í International Community issues statement on HIV/AIDS

UNITED NATIONS — In a statement prepared for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, the Bahá'í International Community called for behavioral changes on the part of men and women — and for greater “love and compassion” on the part of religious leaders and people of faith — as part of an overall effort to address the worldwide HIV/AIDS crisis.

“In order to curtail the spread of HIV/AIDS among women, concrete changes need to occur in the sexual attitudes and behavior of both men and women, but especially men,” said the statement, which was entitled “HIV/AIDS and Gender Equality: Transforming Attitudes and Behaviors” and was prepared for the UN Special Session, which took place at the United Nations in New York 25-27 June 2001.

“Fallacious notions about the naturally voracious sexual appetites of men must be addressed,” continued the statement, which said there is an “undeniable association of AIDS” with sexism.

The statement said men should be a focus of efforts to promote behavioral change “because of the control they have traditionally exercised over women’s lives.”

“The real consequences to women — and men — of the practice of satisfying one’s sexual desires outside of marriage must be fully understood,” said the statement. “Educating women and girls is critically important, but the current power imbalance between men and women can prevent a woman from acting in her own interest.”

The statement also called on religious

leaders and people of faith “to respond with love and compassion to the intense personal suffering of those either directly or indirectly affected by the AIDS crisis.”

“Because the cultivation of humanity’s noble, spiritual core has always been the province of religion, religious communities can play an important role in bringing about the change of heart and the consequent change in behaviors that will make possible an effective response to the AIDS crisis,” the statement said.

“The leaders of faith communities are especially equipped to address the moral dimension of the AIDS crisis both in terms of its prevention and its treatment. The spread of HIV/AIDS would be significantly reduced if individuals were taught to respect the sanctity of the family by practicing abstinence before marriage and fidelity to one’s spouse while married, as underscored in most faith traditions.

The statement noted that a “tendency on the part of society as a whole to judge and blame those afflicted has, since the onset of this disease, stifled compassion for its victims.”

“What is often forgotten is that “moral conduct” includes not only personal restraint but compassion and humility as well,” the statement said. “Faith communities will need to strive continually to rid themselves of judgmental attitudes so that they can exert the kind of moral leadership that encourages personal responsibility, love for one another, and the courage to protect vulnerable groups in society.”*

“Because the cultivation of humanity’s noble, spiritual core has always been the province of religion, religious communities can play an important role in bringing about the change of heart and the consequent change in behaviors that will make possible an effective response to the AIDS crisis.”

– Bahá'í
International
Community
statement

Looking ahead to “Rio Plus 10,” the UN begins to assess progress since the Earth Summit

UNITED NATIONS — Of the major United Nations conferences in the 1990s, none captured the world's imagination like the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

Among the first of such meetings to take place after the end of the cold war, the Earth Summit showed how a wide range of actors, from UN agencies to nation states to non-governmental organizations to associations of private enterprise, could come together and set a bold, consensus-based agenda for action on a major global concern — in this case, how to balance environmental protection with development.

Nearly ten years later, however, many of the commitments made in Agenda 21, as the Earth Summit's ground-breaking action plan is known, remain unfulfilled.

In March, the United Nations released a series of reports on progress made towards achieving the goals of Agenda 21. Those reports indicate progress on many fronts. For instance, the public is more generally aware of environmental issues, gains have been made in life expectancy and areas of health, and there has been a decline in the world population growth rate.

In other areas, however, efforts to achieve sustainable development — the goal of the Earth Summit — have fallen short.

The reports indicate, for example, that while the overall poverty rate worldwide has declined, it has increased in some countries and the gap between rich and poor has widened considerably; that energy use is up even though global economic growth is down; that average development assistance from donor countries has dropped as a percentage of their gross national product, instead of rising as promised; that global warming remains a significant threat; and that, as a result of continuing environmental problems like climate change, deforestation and desertification, the number of endangered plant and animal species continues to rise.

In an effort to assess more fully the achievements and shortfalls in the field of environment and development, the United Nations will next year hold the World Sum-

mit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). Designed as part of the formal 10-year review process that the major UN conferences of the 1990s are undergoing, the Summit will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, 2-11 September 2002.

At the meeting of the WSSD's first Preparatory Committee (PrepCom), held at UN headquarters in New York, 30 April-2 May 2001, the general outline of work leading up to the Johannesburg Summit was established — and some of the key themes it will likely focus on began to emerge.

In outlining its program of work, the PrepCom established dates for future preparatory meetings, adopted provisional rules of procedure for the Summit, and set a preliminary agenda for high-level meetings in Johannesburg. It also established arrangements for accreditation and participation of NGOs and other major groups, such as businesses, which have all been encouraged to become involved.

In terms of new themes, a number of issues began to emerge at the PrepCom, including how sustainable development relates to globalization and the eradication of poverty. In addition, there was much discussion about the necessity of values and ethics in promoting sustainable development.

“The world does not look the same as it did when we met in Rio ten years ago,” said Nitin Desai, the UN's Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, addressing the PrepCom. “Changes have taken place, which we cannot but take into account when we meet again at the Johannesburg Summit. The most important of these is globalization.

“Globalization has resulted in the growing integration of economies, but not just of economies, but also of many other areas of life, the impact of which needs to be considered in Johannesburg. We need to look at the impact of globalization on the possibility for sustainable development at the local or national level and we need to look at the particular areas that should be addressed,” said Mr. Desai. “An important subset is the concern about how we make the

In an effort to assess the achievements and shortfalls worldwide in achieving sustainable development, the United Nations will hold the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 2-11 September 2002.

operations of large companies and transnational corporations compatible with sustainable development.”

Mr. Desai said another important issue that the WSSD is likely to address is the relationship between sustainable development and “the emerging agenda on poverty eradication.”

“Much of the agenda on poverty eradication is people centered,” said Mr. Desai. “It focuses attention on services to be delivered to individuals. What sustainable development can contribute to this agenda is a focus on the resources dimension. An individual cannot be brought out of poverty unless you address squarely the quality, the integrity, and the productivity of the resources on which that individual’s livelihood depends. This is particularly true for the rural poor in the developing world, but is certainly also important for addressing the concerns of the urban poor. Many of their concerns are concerns that connect directly with the sustainable development agenda.”

Participants in the PrepCom indicated that the WSSD will also likely focus on how better to bring sustainable development and Agenda 21 from theory to practice.

Emil Salim, chairman of the PrepCom, took note of negative and positive trends that the WSSD will need to address. Prof. Salim, a top diplomat from Indonesia, said worldwide consumption continues to grow faster than the “regeneration capacity” of renewable resources and major features of Agenda 21 have not been embraced as priorities.

On the positive side, he said, concepts and theories of sustainable development have been advanced and have won wide backing among major groups in the private sector and civil society.

“The bottom line, however, is the fact that the development that we have pursued this far is not sustainable in any economic, social and environmental sense,” said Prof. Salim. He called on developing and developed countries to work more closely to bring sustainable development into reality.

“The world is shrinking and interdependency is the driving force of development today,” he added. “It forces upon us the need to reinvigorate effective implementation of sustainable development. The international community has the skill, technology and capacity to improve the sustainable development architecture.

“To develop this architecture, we need to join forces together, developed and de-



veloping countries. Both countries are in the same Spaceship Earth facing the challenge of moving along the chartered course of sustainable development. The alternative to this is that we all together, developed and developing countries, in this same Spaceship Earth, will crash in an environmental catastrophe,” said Prof. Salim.

The question of how to promote more widely the ethic of sustainable development and the values needed to ensure its success emerged as another key theme at the PrepCom.

“One of the most important outputs of the Rio conference was the Rio Declaration,” said Halldor Thorgeisson, head of Iceland’s delegation to the PrepCom, referring to the overarching statement of principles issued by governments at the Earth Summit. “It laid the conceptual and ethical framework for our work. The World Summit could advance this conceptual and ethical framework even further.”

Mr. Thorgeisson suggested that among the ethical principles that might be stressed is the “common responsibility” for all to promote “development which meets real needs without causing environmental damage.”

In a statement to the PrepCom, the Bahá’í International Community likewise stressed the fundamental importance of ethics and values in achieving sustainable development, and in particular urged the PrepCom to explore the importance of spiritual values. The Community was one of five NGO statements read to the plenary session on the opening day.

“[U]nless and until spiritual issues be-

Rio Plus 10, continued on page 14

A half-day workshop entitled “International Environmental Governance – the Role of UNEP,” was held 1 May 2001 at the Bahá’í International Community offices in New York, during the PrepCom for the WSSD. Co-supported by LEAD International, the World Federalist Movement, World Humanity Action Trust, and UNED Forum, and hosted by the Bahá’í International Community, the workshop sought to provide NGO input to the 21st Governing Council Session of UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and to initiate discussion regarding the international architecture needed for sustainable development. Shown above are several workshop participants. From left to right are Paul Hohnen, an international environmental consultant, Maria Ivanova of the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy and Lawrence Arturo of the Bahá’í International Community.

In London, the late Madame Rabbani is honored for contributions to conservation and the arts

LONDON, 15 June 2001 (BWNS) — The late Madame Ruhiyyih Rabbani, the pre-eminent international dignitary of the Bahá'í Faith, was honored at a tribute here on 15 May 2001. In attendance were some 150 prominent people, including HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Organized by The Arts for Nature, a 13-year-old organization that seeks to draw leading artists and performers into the environmental vanguard, the tribute was held at Canada House in Trafalgar Square. It featured an evening of music and drama, much of it produced especially for the occasion and using the writings of Madame Rabbani.

"We can be convinced academically and intellectually that conservation is important, but what's also important is that we are involved in this issue emotionally," said Prince Philip in extemporaneous remarks at the end of the evening. "Madame Rabbani made

a huge contribution to raising awareness in this field, and this has been a marvelous experience and a splendid evening."

An author, filmmaker and lecturer who cared deeply for the environment and indigenous peoples, Madame Rabbani passed away on 19 January 2000. Also known to Bahá'ís as Ruhiyyih Khanum, she was, further, a Hand of the Cause, the highest position occupied by individuals in the Bahá'í Faith, and she played an important role in promoting the unity and integration of the Bahá'í community over the years.

The evening tribute was organized largely by the Duchess of Abercorn, the chair of The Arts for Nature. The event began with dinner and a viewing of some of Prince Philip's private collection of nature paintings, in particular the work of Canadian wildlife artists. In addition, architectural drawings by the distinguished Canadian architect William Sutherland Maxwell, Madame Rabbani's father, were displayed.

The main focus of the evening was a theatrical performance entitled "A Life So Noble," which had been inspired by Madame Rabbani's life. Written by Canadian-born actress/writer Beverley Evans and directed by Annabel Knight, the show took four major aspects of Madame Rabbani's life and character, which were personified by four women actresses, who told her story using words taken from Madame Rabbani's own lectures and writings.

The actresses — Maria Friedman, Beverley Evans, Sarah Clive and Kerry-Ann Smith — conveyed with power and emotion the breadth of Madame Rabbani's achievements. There were deeply moving moments, including a scene depicting the funeral of Shoghi Effendi when thousands of flower petals rained down upon the stage from above. Madame Rabbani's world travels were portrayed with wit and verve, while a list of her pets and favorite animals caused great amusement.

The actresses were supported by four



HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, left, chats with Barney Leith, secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom, at an Arts for Nature tribute honoring Madame Ruhiyyih Rabbani, held 15 May in London.

other women — from Botswana, Macau, Bolivia and Iran — who wove a floral tapestry as the story unfolded, a metaphor for the rich and varied tapestry that was Madame Rabbani's life.

Other high points included a musical performance of a composition by William Lovelady, set to the words of a poem by Madame Rabbani, "This is Faith." The evening ended with Madame Rabbani's own recorded voice, speaking at a meeting in Belfast, where she had told the audience how much she disliked saying good-bye.

The Duchess of Abercorn told the audience that Madame Rabbani had left the world a better place than it was when she had come into it, urging them, like Madame Rabbani, to contribute their "special thread" to the tapestry of life. "I hope that everyone here will pick up their own thread of creativity and quality of spirit and heart, and bring it into every aspect of our lives, because that's what the world is desperately in need of," she said.

Among the guests was Violette Nakhjavani, who accompanied Madame Rabbani during her travels and has recently written a book about her life. "I thought it was beautifully done," Mrs. Nakhjavani said of the dramatic narrative. "I was very surprised at the warm response of the audience to the personal details of Ruhiyyih Khanum's life," said Ms. Nakhjavani.

Born Mary Maxwell in 1910, Madame Rabbani was the widow of Shoghi Effendi, who headed the Bahá'í Faith from 1921 to 1957. As such, she was for Bahá'ís the last remaining link to the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who headed the Faith from 1892 to 1921 and was the eldest son of the Faith's Founder, Bahá'u'lláh.

In her role as a Hand of the Cause, Madame Rabbani traveled extensively, visiting some 185 countries and territories to encourage the spiritual and moral development of Bahá'í communities. She also sought throughout her life to promote environmental conservation. She was, for example, a founding member of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, a major interfaith organization that promotes the involvement of religious groups in conservation efforts.

Madame Rabbani also gave support to The Arts for Nature's inaugural event, which was held 26 October 1988 at Syon House in London. Madame Rabbani gave the keynote address, alongside Prince Philip, at the Syon



House event, which was organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature-UK and the Bahá'í International Community.

Diana Jervis-Read, the Canadian cultural attache, said the commission had been delighted to host the event at Canada House, especially given that Madame Rabbani was raised in Canada.

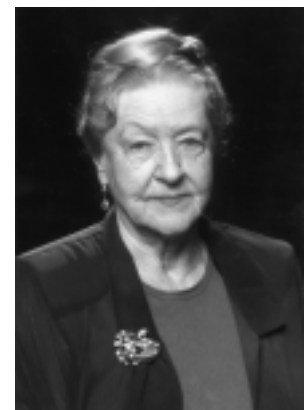
Every guest received a brochure produced for the event, as well as a specially compiled illustrated anthology, *Sacred Earth*, and a copy of Madame Rabbani's book, *Prescription for Living*.

Funds raised at the evening event went towards the Mendelssohn on Mull festival and the Canada House Arts Trust. "There are lots of charity evenings that can be very glitzy, but this was completely different," said Marita Crawley, co-chair of the event, who also wrote a song honoring Madame Rabbani. "Some of the people here knew Madame Rabbani personally, while others were aware of her extraordinary work, but there were people in the audience who were hearing about her for the very first time this evening.

"The play was genuinely thought-provoking and caught the personality of Madame Rabbani, who was truly somebody whose work made the world a better place — and I think everyone who came tonight left with something very special." *

— Reported by Corinne Podger and Rob Weinberg / Bahá'í World News Service

The cast of performers at an Arts for Nature tribute honoring Madame Ruhiyyih Rabbani, held 15 May 2001 in London at Canada House. The event featured not only a dramatic narrative produced especially for the occasion but also several musical numbers.



The late Madame Ruhiyyih Rabbani

On Mount Carmel, newly completed garden terraces are inaugurated

Thousands of Bahá'ís representing some 180 countries attended a devotional program on 23 May 2001 as part of the inauguration of the Terraces on Mount Carmel. At the end of the program, they ascended Mount Carmel, climbing up towards and past the Shrine of the Báb, shown at right in the background, center.



Terraces, continued from first page

On 22 May 2001, the terraces were officially inaugurated with a stirring evening program, which featured the world premiere of two symphonic works composed especially for the occasion and the reading of a statement from the Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith.

The next morning, in a continuation of the inauguration ceremonies, the 2,400 Bahá'ís from around the world, along with some 600 staff members at the Bahá'í World Centre here, streamed up the side of what throughout history has been called “the Mountain of the Lord.”

Coming from more than 180 countries, the procession led many observers to recall the prophecy of Isaiah, which speaks of “all the nations” flowing to the “mountain of the Lord’s house” and the dawning of a new age of peace.

Both events were broadcast around the world via satellite and Internet webcast. As well, the opening of the terraces was covered in numerous newspaper, television and

radio news accounts worldwide. News organizations reporting on the event included the Associated Press, Agence France Presse, the BBC, CBC, China TV, CNN, the DPA German News Agency, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Le Monde*, the *New York Times*, Reuters, and UPI.

“The completion of these structures on Mount Carmel and the ceremonies surrounding them represent a message of hope to the world, a message which is all the more dramatic because of the backdrop of violence and hatred in the Middle East,” said Albert Lincoln, Secretary General of the Bahá'í International Community, in an interview about the significance of the event.

“This extraordinary work of art that we are seeing on the mountain is a visible expression of inspiration that comes only from the Creator,” Dr. Lincoln continued. “It is the same spirit of faith that built the great cathedrals of Europe and the great mosques, monasteries and religious monuments of the East.

“We think the world should consider the great vitality of this force and consider

With participants from more than 180 countries, the procession of some 3,000 Bahá'ís up Mount Carmel on 23 May 2001 led many observers to recall the prophecy of Isaiah, which speaks of “all the nations” flowing to the “mountain of the Lord’s house” and the dawning of a new age of peace.

setting aside some of the negative stereotypes which have in this modern era come to characterize religion,” said Dr. Lincoln. “In other words, we see these terraces and this event as an opportunity to see the positive force of faith at work.”

Shrine is the focus

The focus of the terraces is the Shrine of the Báb, a golden-domed, white marble structure that is to Bahá’ís one of the most holy places in the world. It is the final resting place of the Báb, the Herald of the Bahá’í Faith, who was born in Iran in 1819 and executed in 1850 at the order of religious authorities, who were challenged by His claim to prophethood and the rapid growth in the number of His followers.

Much of the week-long program in May celebrated the ultimate triumph of the Báb and His message, inasmuch as the Bahá’í Faith is today a worldwide community of more than 5 million people and is recognized as the second-most widespread independent world religion after Christianity.

In its statement, read 22 May, the Universal House of Justice offered the terraces, the celebration surrounding them, and the Shrine they glorify, as a source of hope against the “turmoil and crises of our time.”

“That our Earth has contracted into a neighborhood, no one can seriously deny,” said the statement. “The world is being made new. Death pangs are yielding to birth pangs. The pain shall pass when members of the human race act upon the common recognition of their essential oneness.

“There is a light at the end of this tunnel of change, beckoning humanity to the goal destined for it according to the testimonies recorded in all the Holy Books. The Shrine of the Báb stands as a symbol of the efficacy of that age-old promise, a sign of its urgency.

“It is, as well, a monument to the triumph of love over hate,” continued the statement. “The gardens that surround that structure, in their rich variety of colors and plants, are a reminder that the human race can live harmoniously in all its diversity.” [The full statement is printed on page 2.]

Many participants, indeed, felt that their coming together for such a celebration reflected the possibilities for peace, in that they came from so many nations and cultures and yet were joined in a common cause.

Their diversity was evident as delegates made their way up Mount Carmel on 23 May, slowly walking up the terraces’ central



stairway in a spirit of devotion. Many wore traditional native costumes and the procession was a showcase of the human garden, resplendent in all its races and colors.

“The idea that more than 3,000 people can come together to do this, it is an example that can show the way the world can be, without any problems or prejudice,” said Galina Iefremova, a 23-year-old teacher from Belarus, who became a Bahá’í in 1993. “All over the world, people are waiting for this.”

Leslie Serrano, a 20-year-old student from Mexico, was reminded, like many others, of the Biblical prophesy of Isaiah.

“I thought of where it says, ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it,’ ” she said, reciting the passage from memory.

“And when I saw all those people from all these nations, climbing up Mount Carmel, I felt that was the fulfillment of that prophesy,” said Ms. Serrano. “It is a privilege without words to be part of that.”

“Holy mountain”

As far back as 1600 BC, Mount Carmel was mentioned as a “holy mountain” in Egyptian records. In the Bible, it is the site of Elijah’s confrontation with the idol worshippers of Baal. It was also sacred to the early Christians and is where the Carmelite Roman Catholic monastic order was founded in 1150.

For Bahá’ís, the mountain was given supreme significance when Bahá’u’lláh visited

Members of the world’s international news media, from BBC to CNN to Le Monde to the New York Times, covered the inauguration of the terraces. Shown above is a crew from Germany’s SAT 1 television channel, interviewing Fariborz Sahba, left, the architect who designed and built the terraces.

On 21 May 2001, in a rehearsal for the opening ceremonies, the Shrine of the Báb and the surrounding terraces were lit while the Northern Israel Symphony Haifa did a series of sound checks at the base of Mount Carmel.



it in the early 1890s and revealed the Tablet of Carmel, which designated Mount Carmel as the site of the Faith's religious and administrative center.

The development of the Bahá'í World Centre, as the complex of buildings, gardens and holy places here is officially known, has proceeded slowly over the last century. The Shrine of the Báb was built in 1909 and its gold-domed superstructure completed in 1953. In 1957, an International Archives building, which houses various historic relics and artifacts, was built. In 1983, the Seat of the Universal House of Justice was completed.

With the completion of the new garden terraces and two other administrative buildings, Bahá'ís believe a major prophesy of their Faith has been fulfilled.

"The significance of this event is that it represents a kind of culmination of the development of the Bahá'í World Centre on this mountain," said Penny Walker, a member of the International Teaching Centre, a key Bahá'í institution in Haifa.

"At the same time, we see that the Bahá'í Faith is established in every country and territory of the world, bringing together an incredible cross-section of the human race, who are all committed to bringing people everywhere into one human family," said Dr. Walker.

"Spiritual gardens"

The garden terraces were designed to create a "spiritual atmosphere" that will not

only showcase the Shrine of the Báb, but also bring to the mind of a visitor the themes of unity in diversity, harmony and peace, said architect Fariborz Sahba, who designed them and oversaw their construction.

The 19 new terraces — one on the same level as the Shrine of the Báb, nine extending above it and nine extending below it — form a grand series of brackets, which accentuate the Shrine's position in the heart of the mountainside.

"If a diamond is not set properly, its value does not show," said Mr. Sahba. "The Terraces provide both a physical and a spiritual setting for the Shrine. Everything directs your eyes towards the Shrine."

A series of stairways runs up through the terraces from the base of Mount Carmel almost to its peak. The staircase, made of beige stone, is flanked by two streams of running water, forming a man-made brook that gently cascades down the mountainside, flowing through shallow pools at each level.

"In principle, whatever we have done on this mountain aims to provide an approach to the Shrine, to complement it and pay tribute to it," said Mr. Sahba, who also designed the world renowned Bahá'í House of Worship in New Delhi, India. "Our intention has not been merely to build just a beautiful garden. Beautiful gardens are everywhere. But these gardens are spiritual gardens."

He explained that they were designed principally with Bahá'í pilgrims in mind, so

"The significance of this event is that it represents a kind of culmination of the development of the Bahá'í World Centre on this mountain,"

– Penny Walker,
member of the
International
Teaching Centre

In the city of Haifa, the terraces are much welcomed, and promise to be a boon for tourism

HAIFA, Israel — On the first day that a special telephone line was opened in late May to receive reservations for public tours of the newly opened garden terraces on Mount Carmel, operators received some 7,000 bookings — and callers waited for as long as two hours to make them.

Such is the degree of public interest in visiting the terraces, which have been proclaimed as the “eighth wonder of the world” by Haifa’s mayor and received extensive publicity in the Israeli news media.

“We know that there is a lot of built-up anticipation on the part of Israelis and foreign tourists to visit the new terraces,” said Douglas Samimi-Moore, director of the Bahá’í International Community’s Office of Public Information here, which will oversee the guided tour program.

Even before the special reservations line was operational, the Bahá’í World Centre received many calls from people asking when they could visit, said Mr. Samimi-Moore.

A public opinion survey done in February and March indicated that some 95 percent of Haifa residents intend to visit the new terraces “in the near future” — and that an astounding 75 percent of those surveyed throughout Israel had similar plans.

While the terraces and associated gardens are sacred in character, Bahá’ís have always intended that they be shared with the world at large. Accordingly, like other Bahá’í Shrines and holy places in the Haifa-Acre region, the terraces will be open to the public with no admission fee.

Because of the great interest in the project, however, it was decided to establish a program of pre-reserved guided tours, said Mr. Samimi-Moore. These free tours will be the only way that visitors can actually walk through the terraces from end to end. Drop-in visitors will be able to enjoy three special viewing areas located at the base, the peak and roughly in the middle of the terraces.

In the face of the anticipated demand for visits, the Centre reached out to the Haifa Tourist Board and to the Beit Hagefen Arab-Jewish Cultural Center for assistance with the logistics of organizing the tour program.

The Haifa Tourist Board will manage the reservations system, which will begin as a telephone-

only system and then expand later to an on-line system. The Beit Hagefen Center, which already sponsors a wide range of cross-cultural tours and events in Haifa, has been given the task of recruiting and training tour guides.

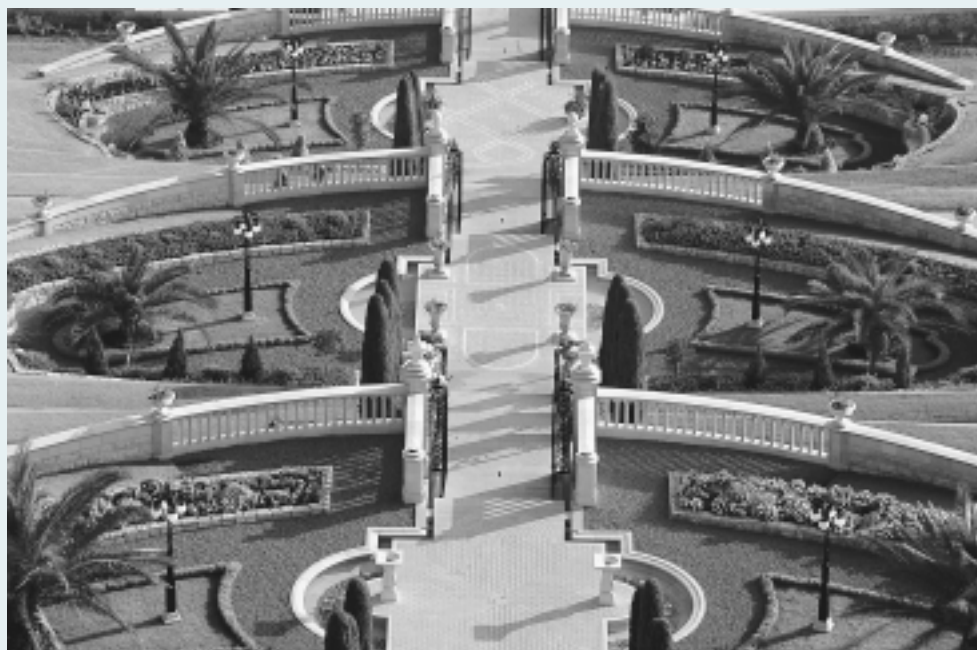
The city of Haifa, indeed, has made the project a centerpiece of its efforts to promote tourism in the region. The city has worked closely with the project’s architect and his staff throughout the construction phase and it has linked to the project the renovation of the historic German Templar Colony district, which runs along Ben Gurion Avenue from the base of Mount Carmel to the sea.

“We consider the gardens a gift to us,” said Moshe Tzur, managing director of the Haifa Tourist Board. “We hope they will become one of the main tourist attractions in the world.”

For its part, Beit Hagefen is bringing in both Jewish and Arab guides, mostly drawn from the students of Haifa University. The first batch of guides, for example, is composed of about 30 Jewish students and 25 Arab students, said Hani El Far, Beit Hagefen’s deputy general director.

“Our aim as an organization is to convey the importance of the coming together of every community in Haifa, Jewish, Arab, Bahá’í and others,” said Mr. El Far, explaining why Beit Hagefen has taken on this project. “And these aims are parallel to the aims of the Bahá’í community.”

People wishing to reserve a place on a guided tour of the terraces should call, in Israel, 04-831-3131.*



With a central stairway built of natural stone, and adorned with iron fixtures and marble fountains, the terraces on Mount Carmel have become a major tourist attraction in Israel.

that as they walk up the terraces towards the Shrine, believers can detach themselves from the outside world and focus on their own relationship with the Creator.

“Bahá’ís have made a tremendous sacrifice to build these monuments,” Mr. Sahba said, explaining that donations for their construction came entirely from Bahá’ís, “dollar by dollar.”

New administrative buildings

While the opening of the terraces was the focus of the public ceremonies on 22 and 23 May, the completion of two new buildings, also located on the side of Mount Carmel, was as much a part of the significance of the event for Bahá’ís.

On 25 May, for example, Bahá’ís assembled outside the two new buildings, the International Teaching Centre and the Centre for the Study of the Texts, in a prayerful observance to mark their completion. Along with the previously completed Seat of the Universal House of Justice and International Archives building, the structures are set along an arc-shaped path on the face of Mount Carmel, slightly to the east of the terraces.

The Center for the Study of the Texts houses scholars and researchers whose role is to study the vast body of the Bahá’í sacred writings, translate them, prepare compilations, and draft commentaries on their relationship to current world problems.

The International Teaching Center building houses a body of appointed individuals that assists the Universal House of Justice and provides guidance and encouragement to the worldwide Bahá’í community on its growth and development.

Both the architect who designed the new buildings, Hossein Amanat, and Fariborz

Sahba, were given warm appreciation in an evening program Wednesday, 23 May, the highlight of which was the showing of a new 38-minute video documentary on the roughly 15-year-long planning and construction process for the new structures.

Titled “Not Even a Lamp,” the documentary details the immense challenges faced in working on the slope of Mount Carmel. The architects had to work carefully so as not to disturb neighbors, the surrounding gardens and buildings, or the Shrine of the Báb.

Mr. Amanat said the buildings were designed to last for 500 years: “Every detail, when implemented, was done with a great amount of research as to what kinds of materials we should use, what technology we should use, so that these buildings will last as long as possible.”

“This was not an ordinary project,” Mr. Amanat told the gathering. “This was a kind of sacred task for us. We really looked on it as a prayer.”

World premiere of new works

The importance Bahá’ís give to the completion of the terraces and new buildings was underscored in the decision by the Universal House of Justice to commission two orchestral works for the inauguration — and then to engage a symphony orchestra and a 70-voice choir to perform them.

For nearly two weeks, one of Haifa’s main intersections, where Ben Gurion Avenue meets the base of Mount Carmel, was blocked off while a temporary 4,000-seat amphitheater was built for the concert.

On 22 May, more than 650 dignitaries from Israel and its diplomatic corps, along with roughly 100 representatives of the international news media, joined the 3,000

“This was not an ordinary project. This was a kind of sacred task for us. We really looked on it as a prayer.”
– Hossein Amanat,
architect

On Friday, 25 May 2001, the some 3,000 Bahá’ís present in Haifa gathered along an arc-shaped path that connect the main administrative buildings of the Bahá’í World Centre, of which two are newly completed. Shown in the background, center, is the new Center for the Study of the Texts building. At the far right is the International Archives building, completed in 1957.





On 21 May 2001, the day before the concert, composer Lasse Thoresen, right, confers with Jack Lenz, left, about final arrangements for the world premiere of Thoresen's "Terraces of Light." In the background is the temporary 4,000 seat amphitheater erected for the concert and ceremony. Mr. Lenz was the event's music director.

Bahá'ís gathered for the occasion in the amphitheater for the opening concert.

The dignitaries included several Israeli Government ministers and deputy ministers, three Israeli Supreme Court justices, and more than 30 ambassadors to Israel from around the world. Members of the Israeli Knesset and local officials, including the Mayors of Haifa and Acre, were also present, as were local and regional religious leaders.

The first piece of music in the program was "O Queen of Carmel!," a symphonic composition in three movements, written by Tolibkhon Shakahidi, a composer from Tajikistan. The second piece, "Terraces of Light," was composed by Lasse Thoresen, one of Norway's best known classical composers.

Mr. Shakahidi's piece is based on a eulogy by Shoghi Effendi, who led the Bahá'í Faith from 1921 to 1957, to "the Queen of Carmel," as Bahá'ís sometimes refer to the Shrine of the Báb. Lyrical and melodic, it made for a serene opening work.

Prof. Thoresen's composition is an oratorio in five movements, corresponding to the five paragraphs and essential themes found in the stirring Tablet of Carmel, a key piece of Bahá'í scripture, which was written by Bahá'u'lláh about the role that Mount Carmel plays in religious history and as the world center of His Cause. Its modern rhythms and complex intensity were stirring.

"The Tablet of Carmel is essentially an ecstatic text," said Prof. Thoresen. "It tells of an event where God has chosen this

mountain as His throne. And the themes of my composition have to do with the establishment of a spiritual, global center, which is happening vertically, between heaven and earth, and, second, a movement from that center out to all countries."

Both pieces were performed by the Israel Northern Symphony, Haifa, under the direction of Stanley Sperber, and featured three Canadian soloists — mezzo-soprano Patricia Green, tenor Stuart Howe and baritone Brett Polegato. Also featured were Austrian violinists Bijan Khadem-Missagh, his son Vahid and daughter Martha, and the Transylvania State Philharmonic Choir of Cluj, Romania.

The interplay of human voices and the orchestra, in an outdoor setting at the foot of Mount Carmel, with the audience facing upward toward the beautifully illuminated Shrine of the Báb, was a moving experience for many of the participants, most of whom had been selected by their national Bahá'í governing bodies to represent their country at this event.

The musical climax of "Terraces of Light" was timed to occur just after the sun had set. As the music reached its crescendo, the 19 terraces were lit up one by one in a brilliant flourish that will be remembered by participants for a lifetime.

"It was stunning," said Nancy Oloro, a delegate from Zambia. "I felt myself in a different world. In the Bahá'í writings, it is said that music gives wings to the soul. And I felt that."*

"I felt myself in a different world. In the Bahá'í writings, it is said that music gives wings to the soul. And I felt that."

– Nancy Oloro, a delegate from Zambia

Final financial statement on the Millennium Forum issued, follow-up committee established

UNITED NATIONS — After a series of hearings held here in March, April and May on possible follow-up activities to the Millennium Forum, it was announced that the Millennium Forum Executive Committee had been dissolved and its work passed to an “Interim Millennium Forum Follow-up Committee.”

In June, the treasurer of the Forum, Estelle Perry, released a final financial statement for the event, indicating that the Forum had raised a total of US\$325,508. Of that, it spent \$241,570, leaving \$83,938 unspent. Ms. Perry noted that much of the surplus resulted from fees paid by Forum participants in May 2000, at the Forum itself. Of the money spent by the Forum, \$167,618 was used to assist participants from the global south or countries in transition.

Held 22-26 May 2000 as a civil society companion conference to the UN Millennium Summit, the Forum was organized entirely by NGOs and drew some 1,350

people from at least 106 countries. It resulted in the issuing of a 9,000 word Declaration and Agenda for Action.

According to Millennium Forum Co-Chair Techeste Ahderom, the Interim Follow-up Committee will be composed of members of the boards of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC (CONGO), the chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, and several members of the Forum's Executive Committee, in keeping with a resolution approved on the Forum's last day.

“The Millennium Forum Executive Committee has ceased to exist,” said Mr. Ahderom. Among the members of the Interim Millennium Forum Follow-up Committee are Renata Bloem, president of CONGO; Afaf Mahfouz, past president of CONGO; Kay C. Greene, chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee; and Esmeralda Brown, one of the Forum's vice-chairs, said Mr. Ahderom.*

Preparations for “Rio + 10”

Rio Plus 10, continued from page 5

come central to the development process, the establishment of a sustainable global civilization will prove impossible,” said the statement, which was entitled “Sustainable Development: The Spiritual Dimension.”

“For the vast majority of the world's people the idea that human nature is fundamentally spiritual is an incontrovertible truth. Indeed, this perception of reality is the defining cultural experience for most of the world's people and is inseparable from how they perceive themselves and the world around them,” the statement continued. “It is, therefore, only by bringing a focus on the spiritual dimension of human reality that development policies and programs can truly reflect the experiences, conditions and aspirations of the planet's inhabitants and elicit their heartfelt support and active participation.”

The Bahá'í statement also urged the PrepCom to look at the development of interfaith relations and the expansion of interfaith initiatives as it searches for new ways to motivate people to embrace sus-

tainable development.

“Religious and spiritual traditions are increasingly coming together to foster friendliness, fellowship and understanding among their diverse communities,” the statement continued. “They are also increasingly working together on policies, programs and initiatives with secular bodies ranging from private enterprises and organizations of civil society, to governments and international institutions. In such work, religious and spiritual value systems are viewed not as separate from ‘real world concerns,’ but as vital sources of knowledge and motivation, as wellsprings of values, insights, and energy without which social cohesion and collective action are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.”

“Ultimately, the creation of a peaceful and just global civilization, in which the diverse peoples of the world live in harmony with one another and with the natural world, will require a significant reorientation of individual and collective goals and a profound transformation in attitudes and behaviors,” the statement concluded. “Such far-reaching changes will come about only by addressing the non-material dimension of reality and drawing on humanity's vast spiritual resources.”*

Review: Toward a Global Civilization

Review, continued from back page

“ethos of consumerism that forecloses the most fulfilling forms of individual and social self-realization.”

The remedy, he suggests, is an energetic civil society movement of “globalization-from-below,” which would resist such trends. Such a movement, he argues, must be strengthened by religious commitments.

“Among the surprises of the last several decades has been a multifaceted worldwide resurgence of religion as a potent force in human affairs, suggesting a relevance to the concerns of the public sphere as well as the private sphere,” writes Prof. Falk.

“It is, in the end, this possibility of a religiously grounded transnational movement for a just world order that alone gives hope that humane global governance can become a reality sometime early in the twenty-first century.”

The essays by religious believers largely echo this notion, with each author offering the teachings and principles of his or her tradition as key elements in a peaceful and just world order. The diversity of views and richness of ideas is too great to present fully here, so a sampling will have to suffice.

In presenting a Jain view, for example, P.N. (Bawa) Jain suggests that Jainism’s overarching principle of non-violence, coupled with its relativist view of truth, offer key principles for the development of “social, ethical, national and international harmony.”

“In reality, even the highest knowledge acquired by an embodied soul in this vast world is limited, imperfect and one-sided,” writes Mr. Jain, elaborating the Jain doctrine of “multiplicity of truth,” known as *anekanta*. “It is not possible for persons to comprehend simultaneously the infinite qualities of an object...”

“The doctrine of *anekanta* paves the way for harmony and removal of conflicts,” continues Mr. Jain, who is the UN representative of the International Mahavir Jain Mission and served as Secretary General of last year’s Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the UN. “There is an element of truth in every statement, and it is possible to dissolve the conflict in a straightforward manner by understanding that element of truth.”

Presenting an Islamic view, Saleha Mahmood-Abedin suggests that the Islamic idea of *ummah*, or the “community of believers,” could provide a “global structure to operationalize a civic society.”

“The *ummah* in Islam is not fractured by national boundaries and territorial sovereignty,” writes Mr. Mahmood-Abedin, who is director of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia. “It is not exclusive to particular peoples, races or classes.

“With such a tradition of universality, extending beyond Islam to reach out to peoples of all other faith traditions is but an exercise on familiar territory; for if one can transcend all barriers of language, culture, and lifestyle and discover the essence of unity and brotherhood in Islam, one can move further and stretch to include all mankind...” writes Mr. Mahmood-Abedin.

Presenting the Bahá’í view, John Woodall points out that the goal of world unity is “the animating purpose that underlies the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh,” the Founder of the Bahá’í Faith. “To Bahá’í thinking, efforts that promote this principle move in accordance with the will of God and are destined to prevail.”

“Each of the world’s religious traditions provides humanity with the means whereby these goals might be achieved,” continues Dr. Woodall, a research fellow at Harvard Medical School. “To Bahá’í thinking, it is because humanity has matured sufficiently in its collective life that it can now more fully understand and implement on a global scale the eternal truths of all religions.”

Further, Dr. Woodall suggests, specific Bahá’í teachings on the equality of women and men, economic justice, and human dignity provide key elements for global development and the creation of a peaceful world — and its community of some five million believers is a model for how to put this into practice.

“[W]orld order issues are at the heart of the entire Bahá’í experience,” writes Dr. Woodall. “In each locality where Bahá’ís reside around the world, efforts are exerted to proclaim the oneness of humanity...”

While a number of books in recent years have addressed how religions approach issues of sustainable development, poverty alleviation and human rights, this is among the first to address overall how religions approach the issues of world order and relations with the United Nations. In this regard the volume is a much needed and valuable contribution to the fields of international relations and interfaith studies.*

“To Bahá’í thinking, it is because humanity has matured sufficiently in its collective life that it can now more fully understand and implement on a global scale the eternal truths of all religions.”

– Dr. John Woodall

Can religion cure “inhumane global governance?”

Toward a Global Civilization? The Contribution of Religions

*Edited by
Patricia M.
Mische and
Melissa Merkling*

Peter Lang

New York

As Richard Falk points out in a recent essay, religion has generally been excluded from the serious study and practice of governance over the last several hundred years, and especially in recent attempts to forge some sort of new world order.

“The exclusion is definitely a consequence of the European Enlightenment and its endorsement of autonomous reason as the only reliable guide for human affairs,” he writes in an essay entitled “The Religious Foundations for Humane Governance.”

The essay appears in a new book, *Toward a Global Civilization? The Contribution of Religions*, edited by Patricia M. Mische and Melissa Merkling. In it, Prof. Falk goes on to say that religion has much to contribute to the subject — a fact that the book itself goes far in demonstrating.

A collection of some 21 essays by religious believers representing virtually every major religious tradition — along with a few secular specialists on world order like Prof. Falk — *Toward a Global Civilization?* seeks to examine what and how religions might contribute to the creation of a peaceful and just international order.

The result is, as co-editor Mische notes in her introduction, “a rainbow-hued mosaic of human experience,” offering “a composite picture...as seen from diverse perspectives and a great variety of traditions.”

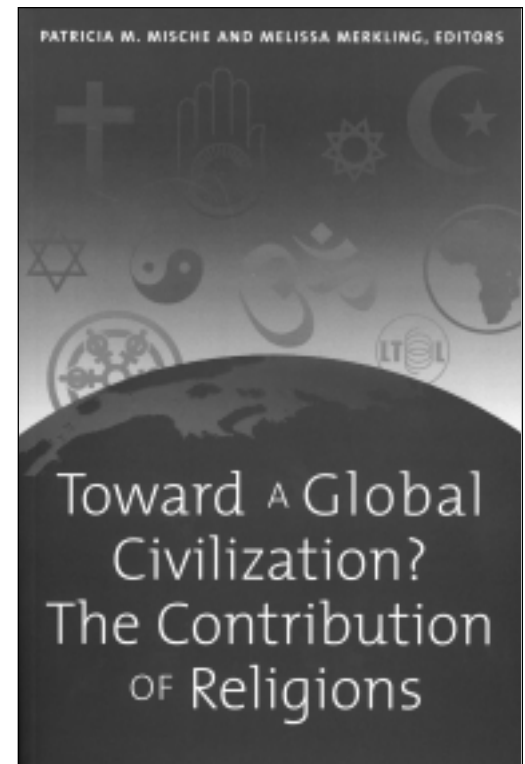
Indeed, with essays from believers representing the Bahá’í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, and Judaism, as well as African indigenous traditions, the book covers a wide ground.

Following guidelines set by the book’s editors, the essayists seek to identify those teachings and principles from their religious traditions that offer the most to the world at large in four general areas: “working toward a shared global ethic,” building “just world systems,” collaborating with the United Nations and its agencies, and “developing multireligious initiatives.”

And although the essayists differ in their precise conception of world order and exactly how religions should contribute to it, there is nevertheless a certain harmony in

the presentations, inasmuch as all are able to argue quite persuasively that the world’s religious traditions have much to contribute in terms of helping the world to create, as Prof. Falk calls it, a system for “humane global governance.”

In some respects, Prof. Falk’s essay, presented as the opening article, is the foundation on which the book is built. A noted secular expert on international affairs and world order at Princeton University, Prof. Falk argues that while “dominant trends are converging in such a way as to generate a more integrated form of governance at the global level,” that form is currently shaping up as “a variant of ‘inhumane governance.’”



Prof. Falk focuses on the impact of globalization, arguing that while it has fostered positive trends like the diminishing likelihood of large-scale nuclear war and overall poverty alleviation, on the whole it has neglected the plight of the most vulnerable, placed non-sustainable burdens on the environment, and promoted an

Review, continued on page 15

“Toward a Global Civilization” emerged from a series of symposia sponsored by Global Education Associates, a New York-based international non-governmental organization founded in 1973 to explore the linkages between religion and world order. The book can be ordered and many of the essays in this book can be read at <http://www.globaleduc.org>